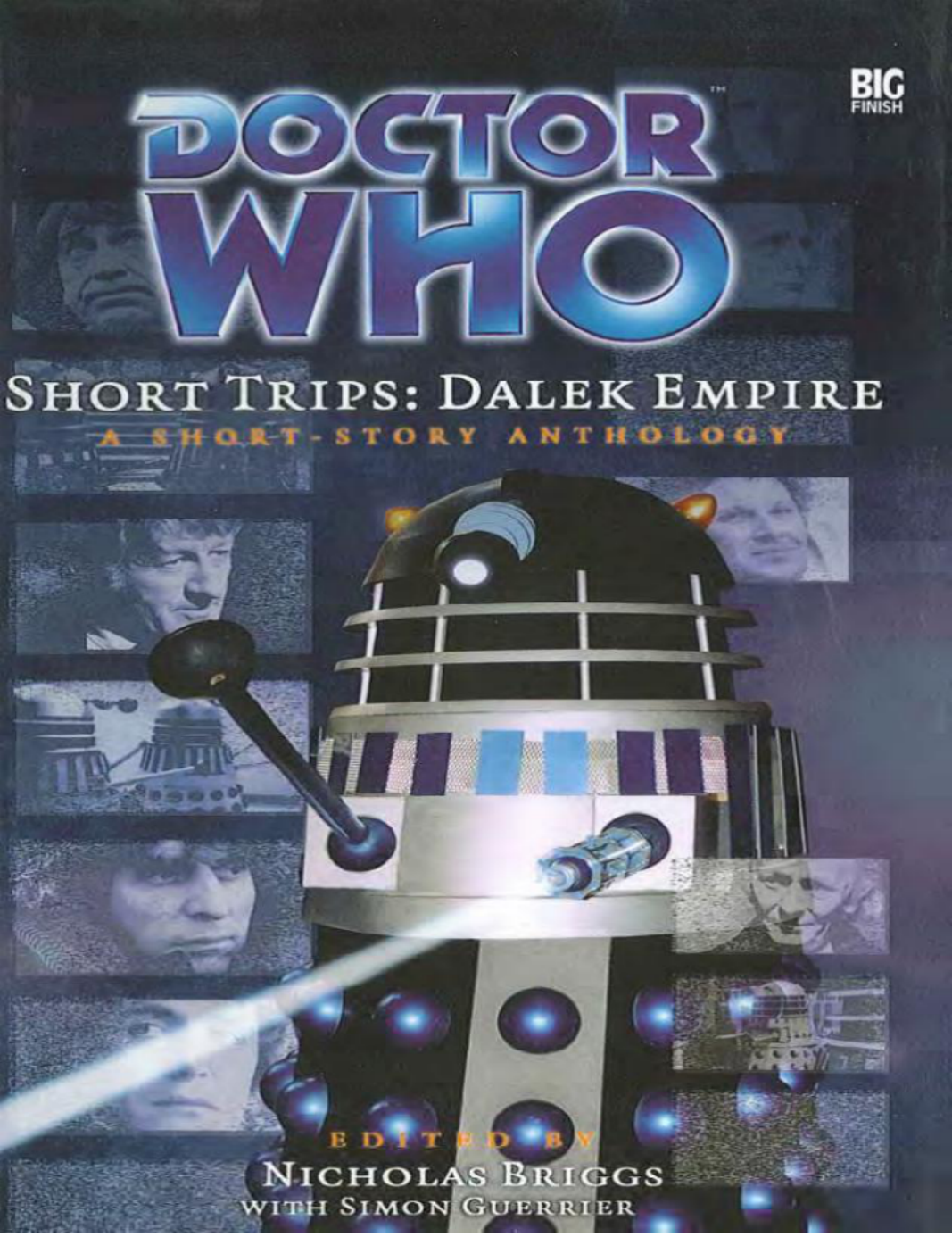
BIG FINISH

DOCTOR WHO

SHORT TRIPS: DALEK EMPIRE

A SHORT-STORY ANTHOLOGY



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Kalendorf

Nicholas Briggs

It was difficult for him, being among humans, and the planet was hill of them. He had not wanted the mission; but there was no point arguing with an order from the court of the First Knight. Not if you ever wanted your family to enjoy privilege again.

And so here he was, Kalendorf, Knight of Velyshaa; reduced to

the role of covert peace envoy, skulking about in a third rate spaceport on the outer planet Vega VI. The sickly tang of retro fuel was eating into the back of his throat as he paced around the

deserted maintenance depot, wondering how long he would have to wait.

This was to be the moment of first, actual diplomatic contact

between human and Velyshaan for seven generations. The war had been over that long. The Velyshaans had been defeated, penalised by punitive peace treaties from every vindictive species in the galaxy, and then left alone on their home world to deal with cultural humiliation as best they could.

That had been the one saving grace for the Velyshaans; the

chance to recover dignity in private. It had been granted and

enforced by the Earth Alliance, and the Velyshaans would never forget that one act of near-kindness.

Kalendorf would have preferred to have been back on his

homeworld, honing his noble skills, dreaming of the day Velyshaa would be great and powerful again. But the new First Knight of Velyshaa was a pragmatist. 'Praylaron The Pragmatist', as the Earth Alliance media had nicknamed him; a leader who looked to a future of cooperation with his planet's traditional enemies, the humans.

Praylaron had foreseen the emergence of a terrible, future foe that might sweep aside human and Velyshaan alike, wreaking havoc and destroying civilisation. To that end, he sought an alliance with the Earth government. Coded transmissions had begun around ten years ago... And finally, the painstakingly detailed preliminary

negotiations were over, and this was the result...

Kalendorf, in a Vega VI spaceport. And still no sign of his human 1

contact. As every moment passed, he fought down his impatience and reassured himself with the only two mitigating factors he could muster. He had been told that this was the most important mission a knight had ever accepted, and his human contact, agent Alby Brook, was reportedly someone who never played by the rules.

He hated this last fact. From what he had heard, Brook might be playing some clever game of manipulation, but he was just as likely to be in a bar with a girl for no good reason. It was a frustrating sign of Earth Alliance Security's cynicism about a possible deal with Velyshaa that they had assigned one of their less reliable operatives.

But what choice had the Velyshaans? They were the underdogs, the

vanquished tormentors of the galaxy who had once come close to creating a powerful empire. They had to show willing, no matter how flippant the response of the victors.

At the echoing hoot of a distant klaxon, Kalendorf pressed

himself into the shadows. The smell of fuel was worse in this dark enclave; sticky metallic walls and cut-off ends of siphon piping, both in dire need of cleaning. The klaxon signified the next

maintenance shift was beginning. That meant Brook was a full hour late. A brief fantasy of splitting Brook's mind in half with a psychic blow crossed Kalendorf's thoughts and made him smirk

momentarily. He was going to have to find this Alby Brook himself, and when he did...

There was something wrong, the klaxon was not stopping, and

there was the sound of some distant, vocal panic. Moving just to the edge of his shadowy hiding place, Kalendorf scanned the area. Each exit of the giant hangar was still shut. Nobody had emerged from the hatches in the deep, concrete blast bays. The sky skimmer craft, lined up for repair were still littered with discarded hand-tools.

The distant voices had receded further, but their vocal quality was more shrill, fearful. Scared people were running away.

Concentrating, he drew on the resources of his noble training and cranked up his hearing. His timing was bad, because just as he had discerned the word 'attack' from the mass of jittery screams, his eardrums were slammed into numbing pain by an explosive

percussion that sent him crashing against the wall.

There had been a fierce glow burning around all the exits the

instant before the sound, and he had stupidly mistaken this for light from an engine blast. By the time he was about to question his judgement, the sound and the blast had hit him.

Recovering, he fought against the relentless roar of this gigantic explosion and forced himself towards one of the blast bays. The metal walls of the hangar were starting to bow, buckle and crack. A 2

sustained explosion somewhere was kicking up a shock-wave

storm. Just as he threw himself into the nearest blast bay, he heard the yawning wrench of the hangar walls heaving themselves out of their foundations. By the time he had hit hard down on the concrete bay floor, the walls and roof were crashing and scraping overhead.

It suddenly occurred to Kalendorf that he might die here, that Vega VI was under attack and that the whole planet might be in the

process of disintegrating. Then a chunk of something smashed into his head, knocking him unconscious after an ear-splitting second of sharp agony.

A sound woke him. Another explosion. Something minor, quite a

long way off, he thought, as his mind warmed back from inactivity.

He guessed he hadn't been unconscious for long. He couldn't be sure, but in the absence of certain, verifiable information, a Knight of Velyshaa should always trust his gut instinct. From Day One, the ancient Knight Masters hammered that into their snot-nosed, eager cadets.

It was dark... No, pinpoints of light caught his eye. He moved and there was the sound of metallic debris, the resistance of something weighty, a sharp jab from torn metal. He was buried alive.

Another explosion in the distance. Slowly, he realised that these explosions were just the audible punctuation in a muted, distant cacophony of disaster. A rumble of vast fires burning was woven in with the wailing of injured cries, grief, pleas for help and

emergency service vehicles.

His senses almost fully recovered, Kalendorf felt he may be

strong enough to do something useful. He was pretty sure he wasn't going to be crushed. He could still breathe, he could feel all his limbs. There were no close sounds of activity; he was going to have to effect his own rescue.

He braced himself against the debris surrounding him and felt it shift. In that moment, he knew he had the measure of it. It was going to take one hell of a lot of effort, but he would be able to do it. There was another explosion. More wailing cries. He hoped it was going to be worth escaping from this premature burial. Maybe he should just stay here. Accept defeat... There were times when a knight should do

that.

Then he decided. This was not one of those times.

Letting out something between a roar and a cry, he pushed out

from the core of himself. The debris shifted, groaning and crashing.

There was a momentary ripping of flesh as something caught his forehead, drawing blood, but then the pain was gone and his eyes were blinded by unbridled daylight.

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He choked on thick smoke. It smelt like hot metal and burnt flesh.

His senses rushed to adapt, and all at once a stark, hellish landscape fell into shape before him.

He was looking at Vega City. It was on fire. The buildings that were not entirely destroyed were buckled and brutally broken.

Structures were still crumbling and crashing. The flashing lights of ambulance sky skimmers blinked throughout the wreckage. Siren

sounds wafted tortuously on the quickening stench-filled breeze.

What the hell had happened? Perhaps Alby Brook was in there,

dead. Perhaps Kalendorf's mission was over. Maybe the terrible foe that First Knight Praylaron had feared so much had struck the first blow and the death knell of galactic civilisation was already

sounding. Kalendorf looked around the blasted ruins of the

maintenance hangar. Its relatively flimsy structure had been almost flattened. Jagged angles protruded where the grounded skimmers had collapsed off their landing gear. But whatever had caused the explosion, it had happened over twenty kilometres away, perhaps slightly to the south of Vega City's centre. Sturdy structures were still very nearly intact in this out-of-town spaceport. Maybe

transceiver equipment would still be working.

With this thought in his head, Kalendorf headed for the nearest, most upright skimmer. It was one of those oval-shaped, short range, personal skimmers, with room enough for four or five humans to sit

under its trans-aluminium canopy. He clambered over its stumpy left wing and pushed at the canopy release control, already noting that some of the dashboard displays looked alive.

A servo whirred inconclusively. A hydraulic hiss half-started.

Then nothing. He pulled at the catch, trying to force his fingers under the canopy edge. No sign of it budging. But the flicker of lights on the altimeter, registering zero altitude, gave Kalendorf hope. There was power. The darn thing would open.

He pushed the release control again and held it down, closing his eyes and almost praying for a response. Suddenly, he was rewarded.

The canopy lifted and he was inside and seated. Uneasy with this sudden occupation, the skimmer's broken landing gear skittered across the concrete a little. Kalendorf ignored the juddering

movement. His hands hit the comms receiver controls. Static

'shashed' back at him. He jabbed the control for it to auto-tune to the strongest transmission available. And then it hit upon a signal.

'Only moments ago, a large military spacecraft crash-landed in the southern sectors of Vega City. Initial reports are unclear, but a picture of carnage is emerging.' It was a newscaster, trying to maintain cool detachment, but failing. His voice was trembling 4

uncertainly. Kalendorf flicked a look back up at the devastated cityscape as the newscaster's words continued.

'These pictures are coming to you live.'

Kalendorf tapped the dashboard screen. Nothing. It was partially shattered. But he had his own live pictures, and he could smell the reality of the disaster's aftermath.

'Looks... looks very bad... I'm receiving information on the craft which crash-landed...'

It was the type of interplanetary warship the Earth Alliance used for their rapid response fleet. Whatever had encountered it had clearly swatted it out of space and sent it tumbling to its doom on Vega VI. Kalendorf's worst fears were confirmed. For a brief

moment, he recalled his one personal audience with First Knight

Praylaron.

Re-elected and genetically rebirthed by generations of Knight

Councils, Praylaron had seemed remarkably unchanged from the

old war photographs, when he had been one of First Knight

Sancroff's best-loved generals. Beard still tightly cut, perhaps a shade on the grey side, but still dark. Eyes still fierce but pale; windows to a canny wit.

'Daleks,' he had said. 'They have something of the apocalypse

about them. Have you ever seen one?'

Kalendorf had said no, expecting to be shown a picture or... But Praylaron had simply said, 'You'll know one when you see it.

You'll feel like the end of everything has come the moment you set eyes on a Dalek. And the voice... like an ancient engine of death crashing through its gears in a rush to destroy everything.'

Kalendorf now felt it would not be long before he heard that

voice for the first time. It was like it was stalking him in a dark, childhood nightmare.

There was a fierce buzz of interference and the newsreader was gone. Something like a voice was starting to emerge.

And when it was clear, Kalendorf remembered the words of his

leader. He knew this was a Dalek.

'All humanoid life forms beware! The invasion of the Daleks has begun!'

And in that single sentence, it was clear to Kalendorf that all Praylaron's hopes had turned to dust. The wheels of diplomacy had moved far too slowly and now the galaxy was about to be overrun.

He knew now that his duty was to survive and return to the

homeworld. Launching himself out of the skimmer cockpit, he felt the vibration of the landing gear skittering under his feet as he leapt off the fuselage. He heard the whole vehicle crash onto its side as he 5

headed to get a better view of the burning city. No time to look back. He knew he was going to have to move fast if he had any

chance of getting off this planet alive.

And then he saw some hope. Descending through the thick,

billowing smoke, in the distance, a space liner was making its final approach to land at the Vega spaceport to the north of the city. It must be here to pick up refugees, he thought. Somehow, he was

going to have to get there. All he could do was run. Run, in the hope that he'd be able to pick up some other form of transport on the way. It was part of the Knights' code; always to move forward.

Never look back, no matter what.

But as his boots crashed on, the route became harder. More debris twisting and shattering beneath him... Swathes of the screaming dispossessed pushing and pulling him this way and that the closer he got to the rising and falling of the slackening spaceport traffic.

There was the crack of planetary defence artillery. From the

corner of his eyes, he saw the blasts of missiles and energy weapons firing high into orbit. Distant flares of impact rumbled like terrible thunder in the heavens. But he knew from what Praylaron had told him, all resistance was pointless. This was the beginning of the Dalek invasion of the galaxy, and a few anti-aircraft weapons were not going to stop it.

By the time he reached the spaceport, it was all but deserted.

Scattered survivors were running around as if they'd lost their minds. They peered frantically at broken departure indicators, rushed up frozen escalators... they thought they might be the last ones to get away. Kalendorf knew they would give up. Some

already had.

As he moved slowly through the discarded luggage and

overturned trolleys, a man sitting on the concrete floor, leaning against a pillar, threw a drinks container, almost petulantly. It skittered into Kalendorf's path.

'What's going to happen?' the man asked in a small, cracked

voice.

Kalendorf looked at him. The man's eyes were red. He'd been

crying. He was probably exhausted, desperate, confused... in shock.

'I'm not sure,' said Kalendorf. 'But it'll involve dying at some point.'

The man seemed to fold in on himself, as if this fact alone would kill him.

'Sorry,' said Kalendorf. 'I was just answering your question.'

The man's shoulders heaved up and down a little. He seemed not even to have the energy left to make a sound when he wept.

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'What's your name?' Kalendorf asked.

Slowly, the man looked up; for a moment it seemed as if he'd

forgotten.

'What's it to you?'

'Nothing. Mine's Kalendorf. I was here to stop this happening.

What was your job?'

'You don't recognise me?'

Kalendorf wondered if he'd not been fully briefed. He knew the faces of all agents and government officials on Vega VI. This man was evidently important, or thought he was. It seemed reasonable that Kalendorf should know him.

'You really don't recognise me, do you?'

Kalendorf smiled and slowly shook his head. He bent down and

offered the man his hand. With some effort, the man shook it, and managed a bone-dry laugh. A tear leaked down his face.

'I'm a singer. Really successful. Really rich. My face was

everywhere. Didn't you see it?' he asked. Then he looked as though he'd suddenly realised his entire life had meant nothing. 'My

name's Siryo.'

Kalendorf looked at the man's clothes properly for the first time.

Despite the dirt and lacerations, it was clear the material was expensive and probably exclusively styled.

'But if you're rich, you must have private transport,' Kalendorf suggested, the glimmer of a plan forming.

Slumping back, Siryo gave another laugh. 'Yeah. Yeah, I had all that.'

'Well, where is it?'

'I was slumming it,' said Siryo. 'South side. Hanging out with the crew from last night's concert.'

'South side? Isn't that where...?'

Siryo nodded. 'That's where that ship crashed. I don't know how I survived. No one else did. I didn't see anyone else alive, anyway.

Couldn't put a call in to my place... all the comms were out.

Nothing but fire and...' He froze, as if the memory had shut him down completely.

'Your... people probably assumed you were dead,' Kalendorf

said.

Siryo looked up at him. 'You're a real charmer, aren't you?'

They both smiled a little. Neither of them knew what to do now.

A nearby, metallic smash made them both flinch. Kalendorf

spotted it first. A trolley had rolled onto an immobilised escalator and had started to tumble; its momentum increasing, it overturned itself and eventually crashed to the bottom, where it settled, its 7

wheels spinning in the air.

Kalendorf started to stride away.

'Where are you going?' asked Siryo, trying to get up but failing.

'I'm going to check for any sign of inbound traffic.'

Kalendorf pushed the trolley aside and started up the escalator.

‘The last one left... about an hour ago! They said! The crew said!’

Siryo called out as Kalendorf was nearing the top. He stopped and looked back down at the famous singer he had never heard of. For the first time, he noticed that Siryo’s leg had settled at an awkward angle. Maybe it was broken. It probably was.

But what was the difference between them? They were both

helpless, both stranded on a planet that had offered token resistance to an invading force that had the firepower to wipe whole star systems off the chart. Whether you could walk or run or not wasn’t going to make any difference now.

‘How were you going to stop all this?’ Siryo shouted up with as much effort as he could muster. He collapsed back against the

pillar, exhausted with the effort.

‘With diplomacy,’ Kalendorf said, sitting on the top escalator step. ‘But I was too late. Everyone was too late.’

Siryo was murmuring something. Kalendorf used his Knights’

training to pick up the feeble sounds. ‘Who were our guns firing at?’ he was asking.

Kalendorf stood. He could see the cityscape of Vega through the large departure lounge windows on this upper floor. There were no more weapons firing.

‘Have you heard of the Daleks?’ Kalendorf shouted, looking

down to Siryo. Siryo shook his head slowly. Kalendorf made his way down the escalator. When he reached the bottom, he could see Siryo wincing in pain. ‘How did you hurt your leg?’

Siryo choked on a hopeless laugh. ‘I made it all this way through the fires and the... destruction... Ruined my suit, but I was okay. I almost felt indestructible. Then I got here...’ Another tear ran down his face.

‘You got caught in the crowds?’ Kalendorf prompted.

Siryo nodded. ‘I was so tired. Got knocked down. Trampled.

Think 1 broke some ribs as well.' He looked up at Kalendorf, a pathetic pleading in his eyes for a moment. Then it faded away into dull acceptance. 'You can't help. I know. I know...'

'I'm sorry,' said Kalendorf. 'I think we're all beyond help now.'

'Will they attack?'

'The Daleks?' Kalendorf peered up through the escalator well to the enormous bubble of the departure lounge glass dome. The sky 8

was empty... for now. He nodded slowly. 'Oh, yes, they'll attack.'

'Why?' asked Siryo. 'Did we... I don't know... Did we... upset them somehow? Who the hell are they anyway?'

'A very wise man once told me they were the end of everything.'

At that moment, the floor shook with a violence that made

Kalendorf's heart thud against his chest. The flooring tiles rippled as if something was trying to escape from within the planet. Then the crack of a heavy explosion filled the air. Dust and debris fell from the ceiling. A roof support crashed downwards. Glass

shattered and splintered from the departure lounge, cascading down the escalators, showering down like raining blades.

Siryo coughed violently, blood on his lips. He'd been blown

sideways by the blast. Almost without knowing he was doing it, Kalendorf had leapt to his side to pull him upright. 'And now it's beginning?' Siryo managed to ask.

Kalendorf felt he didn't need to answer. He wanted to ask Siryo if he was all right. But what was the point? 'What will you do?' Siryo asked.

Another deep shudder. This impact was clearly slightly further away; but the building's structure had been fatally weakened. Walls started to cave in. More glass showered. The explosive thunder was a few seconds in coming.

For some reason, Kalendorf clung on to Siryo. A closer explosion whited everything out for a moment. And then they found

themselves rolling helplessly in a bouncing tide of debris. Kalendorf

lost his grip on the singer. As the building thundered itself into rubble about him, he looked around frantically. Then he saw Siryo, beaten and bloodied by plaster and concrete, but still alive.

As the thunderous explosion settled, almost as if it were a storm that had mercifully moved on, Kalendorf fought to regain his grip on Siryo's arm. With surprising strength, Siryo pushed him away.

Kalendorf found himself saying, 'There's nowhere to run to.' 'I know,' said Siryo. 'But you must run.'

'Yes.' He knew there was no point; but he knew he must. One

last look into Siryo's eyes. No bravery. No camaraderie. Just a desperate nothing, beyond all fear and knowledge. The end was

coming and Kalendorf knew Siryo didn't even understand why.

Was that better or worse?

Before he knew it, his Knight's training had him running again.

Running just long enough to be thrown clear by another, massive, burning flash as the entire spaceport vaporised... Siryo would be dead now. Siryo had escaped and Kalendorf was still trapped with only the prospect of more suffering in the middle of a Dalek

bombardment. Picking himself up, he ran again, shutting his hearing down altogether as explosion after explosion threw him against concrete, blinded him with scalding flashes, taking away his senses so that he didn't know which was up and which was down. A

bizarre image of himself running with his feet in the sky invaded his mind. But none of it stopped him running. Even if he was going nowhere. Even if he was already dead and didn't know it.

Time seemed to distort into the meaningless hell around him.

Now there was no sound at all in his head – his mind had shut it out completely as useless information. There was just the tunnel vision of escape in front of him; a course weaving desperately around the insanely rapid devastation unfolding as far as he could see.

He knew for certain that these were his last moments, but they stretched and stretched until he began to yearn for an end.

He didn't remember stopping. There was just one sound. It felt like the loudest sound he'd ever heard. His head whipped round in

reaction. On the way, he caught sight of his legs, folded under him.

And then he saw the source of the sound... dry lips, spluttering.

Some wretched survivor coughing up dust.

Suddenly, Kalendorf's head was buzzing with noise. There was

coughing and groaning everywhere. Blinking furiously to refocus, to wake up, to make some sense of what had happened, he rose to his feet. There was a dull pain in one of his ankles... nothing too bad, he could walk on it for now; but he didn't care about that.

Right now, he was taking in the view.

Beneath clouds of rising smoke and drifting, thick dust, the

survivors of Vega VI seemed to have congregated on a vast plain, baked hard by energy-weapon bombardment. It was as if all of them had run as fast as Kalendorf and, at some point personal to each, had found themselves here. No shelter, no prospects, just a place to stop and realise how exhausted they were. A holding place for a population pending death. A concentration camp without a wire

fence.

The Daleks need not attack again. This planet was broken, and its people would be dead within a day or two.

Exhaustion surged up from his aching ankle and Kalendorf

collapsed himself efficiently onto the rock. He had a biting thirst and hunger, but he had seen no sign of food or water. He stared down at the rock; the sounds of thousands of survivors suffering were starting to gnaw at him. For a moment, he wanted to make

them all die now, just so that he could have some peace.

He felt... humiliated...

Degraded.

This was the worst kind of death for a Knight of Velyshaa.

A long time passed, only marked by the worsening hunger and

thirst. He had lost all sense of time, of purpose.

A woman close by muttered something about wondering if they'd

ever see the suns of Vega again. It made him want to kill her. He spat back some unpleasant remark to her. He didn't even know what he'd said.

But then there was another sound. Deep. Technological. From

above. It was a mass of similar sounds, mingling, overlapping to create a shifting, droning buzz. The sound of engines, flying

towards them from the sky.

He could see nothing through those dark clouds. He stared at

them, scanned back and forth. Nothing. But the sound grew louder.

The rock below him trembled with it.

One by one, the survivors suspended their coughing and moans of pain and anguish. They felt the deep vibration in the planet's crust and looked up to see what was coming.

Kalendorf spotted it. He reached out and pointed, but said

nothing. An object had cleared a cloud, high up.

This must be a Dalek, he thought. A cone-shaped thing with

protruding antennae. That was a Dalek? It seemed to be embedded in some sort of disc, a glow of power emitting from beneath. Then suddenly there were hordes of them, pouring through the clouds from all directions.

No one knew how to react. There was nothing they could do.

They don't need to kill us, thought Kalendorf, but they're going to anyway. He remembered his First Knight's words just as he

caught the sound of a distant Dalek voice. He didn't have time to decipher exactly what it was saying from amongst the now

deafening buzz of the Dalek flying engines, but the phrases were staccato and vicious. This was going to be an attack. The Daleks had come to slaughter the survivors of Vega VI.

In the distance, he saw the bright, searing flash of energy beams starting to rain down on the crowds. The screams of panic and of the dying reached him just as a volley of flashes slammed into the ground over to his right. He swivelled instinctively and saw five people momentarily suspended in horrific agony, every bone and vessel in their bodies visibly burning brightly, the life crackling out of them. The woman who had spoken of the suns grabbed him. He

found himself running with her. His ankle was hurting more now. A flash ruptured the rock ahead of them and he lost his balance. He felt sick as he twisted his ankle further. He would fall and wait for death now. That was the right thing to do. He felt that with a sudden 11

certainty. But the woman pulled at him. He looked up at her with the same blankness he had felt in Siryo's eyes. He knew for certain that, like he had left Siryo, she would know it was time to let him die. He slipped his hand from her grip.

But she wouldn't let go. She screamed at him. He tried to listen, but the searing, air-splitting sound of the Dalek blasts and the terrible screams of their victims were impenetrable.

He let his body sink further back. But somehow she heaved him

up to his feet. She was much shorter than him and of a very slight build, but she was actually managing to drag him along with her.

Soon, their feet were crunching on what felt like shingle on a beach.

It was the debris from the splintered bare rock face.

And they ran. Now buffeted by the hundreds who ran with them.

A tide of escaping humanity, Daleks soaring overhead.

Labouring against the pain in his ankle, Kalendorf began to

realise that he really was still trying to survive. His mind became alert again. His Knight's training flickered to life.

This wasn't a massacre. They were being herded. All those who

were fit to run were being herded.

The Daleks wanted the strongest humans alive.

And then it suddenly struck him. One of the words he'd seen the woman mouthing at him through the cacophony of the attack.

'Hope'. That's what she'd said. 'There's still hope.'

That woman had been Susan Mendes. Later, when the Dalek

Empire had victoriously advanced across more than a quarter of the galaxy, she would come to be known as 'the Angel of Mercy'. Not just because she helped Kalendorf to his feet...

But that had been the beginning of it.

Kalendorf worked at her side in the Dalek slave mines of Vega

VI. He saw her challenge the Daleks and demand better conditions for the slaves of their empire.

And as the years passed, Kalendorf was with Susan Mendes as

she toured the ever-enlarging Dalek Empire, giving hope to the slave workforce.

Hope. It was hope that made the slaves efficient and fed the

Dalek war effort with every raw material it needed.

And even when the combined forces of the civilised galaxy

suffered total defeat, and Kalendorf felt in his heart that he and Susan Mendes were the most despicable traitors that had ever

lived...

There was still hope. There had to be.

12

Natalie's Diary Part One

Joseph Lidster

'I was in the pub when the Daleks invaded Rainbow City. No surprise there, then.'

Holly rubbed the sleep out of her eyes and swung her chair away from

the monitor screen. She'd already missed three of Professor Sax's deadlines and knew that if she didn't get good marks for this essay, she'd be chucked off the course. Sipping her coffee, she looked over at Andrew, snoring away, and sighed. Did it matter?

He'd never wanted her to do the course anyway.

'Dalek history?' he'd asked. 'What's the point? It was all years ago anyway.'

And now, at four in the morning, on her fifth cup of coffee and with a blank sheet of paper in front of her, she was pretty much wondering the same thing. She'd wanted to do the course to show Andrew that she could be more than just a secretary. She'd made a Plan with a capital 'P'. If she got a degree, she could get a better job. If she got a better job, she'd get more money. If she had more money then she could... well, she wasn't sure what she'd do but it'd be bound to make things easier for them. No more arguments about who was putting the food on the table. No more worries about

where they'd get the rent from. You know, real things. Real

concerns. And that kind of summed up the problem she was having.

When you're worried that you might have to move back in with

your ancient parents, did it matter what happened to a bunch of people who died centuries before you were born? When you're

living on beans on toast, who cares about King Thingy and Emperor Doodah? When you're wondering whether you're still in love with your... She swung back to the monitor and started to scroll down.

Holly

Please find attached, primary sources regarding the Dalek

assault on Manikis. Four extracts from the diary of Natalie

Fulton, survivor of the attack. Extracts are incomplete but

they should give you some idea of what happened.

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Regards,

Professor D. Sax

‘A survivor?’ she muttered to herself. ‘That kind of spoils the ending.’ Then, sipping the coffee once more, she started to read.

EXTRACT BEGINS

I was in the pub when the Daleks invaded Rainbow City. No

surprise there, then.

It’s taken me ages to decide how to start this. I’m not even sure why I’m writing it down. I mean we all know what happened when they came. We all know how they changed our world. But Hex said it’s important we keep history alive. He sounded like he was talking from experience and, as he helped keep me alive, I guess I owe him.

But rather than open with all the angst and trauma, I thought I’d start with a bit of humour. I bet your sides are splitting.

So, let’s continue with the introductions. My name’s Natalie

Fulton and I’m 23 years old. I’m absolutely stunningly gorgeous with great fashion sense and lovely hair. There’s that ‘humour’

again! Before they came, I was working in the admin section of a company that’s long gone now. Like billions before me and, no

doubt, billions after me, my daily routine consisted of getting up, skipping breakfast, quick shower, bus to work, seven hours of

moving things from column A to column B, a few hours of moving pints from table to mouth then bus home for seven hours of sleep. It wasn’t a thrilling existence but it was fine. It was all fine.

So, yeah, I was in the pub when they invaded. At first we thought it was thunder. Yeah, don’t laugh – it sounded like thunder! I was in the Blue Peter with two of my colleagues, Shona (in, short, cute, liked pink fluffy things) and Ted (24, a real bloke, farted as a hobby). We must have been on our third pint when suddenly the

barman put on the telly. As he usually only did it when there was a match on, we figured something was up. Ted was in the middle of telling us this story about how Vonnie from accounts had spilt a cup of tea down her blouse, when suddenly he stopped. I had my back to the telly and never forget how he just... stopped.

‘She was holding the tea in one hand and gossiping about Martin when, with the usual dramatic irony, Martin walked in and she just panicked and spilt the tea and it all went down –’

And then he stopped. I’ll never forget that because it was the last normal thing I heard before the world changed. His face just went white. And I looked over at Shona and she was the same. And I

turned around and I looked up at the telly and I watched as the sea rose up in flames and crashed onto the Quayside area and I watched

as every building exploded into fire and the people came running out of the bars and houses; but they were on fire too.

So, yeah, that was a bit of a shock. Looking back on it now, you can’t imagine it *not* having happened. It was one of those moments where you saw the images and heard the reporters and it all just instantly burnt into your mind. You knew it was impossible but you also knew that in that instant everything had changed. The world had changed.

There were ships in the sky and they were moving in from the

sea. They were firing stuff into the buildings and crowds. Stuff that made everything burn. The reporter was telling us who they were.

We’d heard of them, of course, but we’d always thought (hoped?) that they’d leave us alone. Their attacks on the outer worlds had been reported but we’d thought (hoped?) that we’d be safe. We’d left them alone so they’d leave us alone. Obviously, we were very wrong. The Quayside was a few miles from the Blue Peter so we

kind of didn’t know what to – Oh, God, I’ve just remembered how Ted started crying! I didn’t know then but his family lived on the Quays. His whole family had just been killed. All of them. I mean, that’s just mental, isn’t it? Your whole family. Your next-door neighbours. The people you see every day on the train. All burning up in an instant. So we weren’t sure what to do. The reporter was telling people to stay in their homes and that the authorities were dealing with the emergency. But we could see what was happening.

The local authorities were burning with everyone else.

I wasn’t worried about my family because they lived out in the valleys. That’s an area of countryside, miles from Rainbow City. I knew they’d be safe. Well, safer than us. I wanted to call them but I’d

no credit on my phone. Then I saw that the networks were down anyway. Which is kind of obvious really but that suddenly made me feel very alone. I mean, I was there with my mates but I couldn't call anyone or anything. Suddenly, at that moment, the only people I wanted to be with were mum and dad. And, of course, I realised that they'd be watching all this and trying to call me! They probably thought I was dead.

Actually, that's what saved me. Just imagining my mum's face...

I knew I had to let her know I was alive. I had to get to her. And then I thought about my brother, Tam (17, lanky, smelly, geek). I thought about how he'd be at home as terrified as the rest of us but then... it was like in a film where the screen goes all funny and you're suddenly in a flashback.

'I know what I'd do if aliens ever invaded.'

He'd been watching one of his films. Yet another film where 15

aliens invaded Old Earth and bizarrely concentrated their attacks on the Empire State Building and Big Ben. He turned to face me.

'I'd get out of the city. The aliens always attack the cities first and everyone just stays there and fries. By the time the aliens even think about getting the people in the countryside, the hero's saved the day.'

Everyone else was doing as the reporter said and staying where they were. The bar staff were going around with free drinks and crisps. It was all so mental and all I could think was about what my little brother had said to me a few years before. Of course, I didn't know whether there'd be a hero to save us but... I looked over at Shona and told her we had to get out of there. She just pointed up at the screen and the reporter telling us not to panic and to stay in our homes. I grabbed hold of her arm and started screaming. We have to get out of the city! Then, Ted stopped crying and looked at us. His face was horrible. 'We could use the old tunnels.'

The tunnels were some kind of old transport system used by the original settlers. They'd been abandoned like years ago but they were still there. Underground. Away from the fire. They'd give us a chance at least. I grabbed Shona's face and turned it away from the burning people on TV and told her that we would stay alive. Me and Ted grabbed an arm each and pulled her to her feet. For some

reason, we walked really slowly. I tried not to look at the other people

in the pub but couldn't resist a glance. They were all just sitting there drinking their free pints, eating their free crisps and crying as they watched their freedom burn. I tried not to remember their faces as we got close to the door leading outside to... well, we didn't know what. Then, taking a deep breath I went to push open the door and screamed as suddenly, it was pulled open from the outside. Three people stood facing us. An old man, a woman and a young bloke who was around my age. They stood looking at us and we stood looking at them. The old man asked where we were going, so I told him. My voice was completely monotone. It was all just like this mental dream.

'Excellent,' he replied. 'I'm the Doctor and these are my friends, Ace and Hex. Now get down!'

'Get down?'

'I'm afraid we're not alone,' he said with a sigh.

I looked at the creature standing behind him. I don't need to

describe what it looked like. We all know what they look like. You know what they look like. They look wrong.

We screamed as it pushed through the strangers and glided

towards –

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REMAINDER OF EXTRACT MISSING

Holly leant back in her chair, her coffee forgotten.

'So, do I start the essay or read the next extract?' she asked.

Andrew mumbled something about caterpillars.

'That's a big help,' she muttered. 'Well, I guess it's up to me.'

And that's when the lights in their apartment went out and she was plunged into darkness.

17

Alby

Sharon Gosling

Alby Brook ran his fingers over the transport ship's control panel and allowed himself a smile. He'd been flying the thing for weeks now, but it still gave him a thrill. It was so clean and shiny. Before he'd taken possession of it, some of the warning lights had only ever been activated for test purposes. This ship was brand-new, and all his. Of course, every thrill like this was accompanied by a swift dose of guilt. Here he was, getting excited about a ship, when out there millions were being exterminated. For most people the galaxy had turned ugly and brutal the moment the Daleks invaded. He

should probably be feeling the same way himself, and it wasn't that he remained unaffected by what was going on. It was just that he was able to – what was the term the psychiatrist had used? –

compartmentalise. It was what made him a good spy, apparently. It was also a classic symptom of sociopathic tendencies, but he wasn't going to dwell on that. Whatever let him do his job, that was what mattered. And it was difficult to think of the Daleks right now.

Beyond the control panel, the view screen stretched entirely

across the front of the ship. If he were caught up in battle, blinking lights and sights would appear as if by magic, chasing the enemy up and down the length of his vision, detailing velocity and predicting next moves, and targeting his broad range of weapons.

But just for the moment there were no enemies to fight, or at least none within shooting distance. The view screen was free of

disturbance. All he could see were the stars and, between them, endless nothing.

Alby leaned back in his very comfortable chair, crossed his arms behind his head and gripped his elbows. He never tired of looking at the stars. It was calming to observe the galaxy from this distance. It lent a feeling of oneness with the universe, and that certainly wasn't a sensation Alby got very often. It made him wish there was

someone here to share it with.

He glanced at the empty seat beside him and couldn't help

thinking of Suz. She would have loved this – though she'd never 18

admit it out loud. He could imagine her now, sitting there in front of him, staring out at the stars and listing the components for matter in

the universe. She would have tried to turn it into a geology lesson, just to hide the fact that she was as romantic as anyone.

But then, of course, thinking about Suz brought another, keener jolt of guilt – and something else too. Confusion. Pain. Excitement, even. A welter of mixed emotions that Alby wasn't used to. Once, he could admit he loved her, and that he'd hoped that their growing friendship would become something else. But now, after all he'd learned about her in the interim years... What was he supposed to feel? Was he supposed to love her despite her working for the

Daleks? Should he abandon her or, better still, wipe her from

existence deliberately? Bringing his arms down again, Alby bent forward and leaned heavily on the flickering control panel. This ship was, he knew, in part payment for hunting Suz down. And here he was revelling in it. Surely that was all he needed to know. He didn't love her any more, did he? How else could he have accepted this ship – and the mission that went with it?

A siren went off, just a small one, accompanied by a red light on the panel's top-right corner. Suddenly alert, Alby leaned forward. It was an intercept signal – the ship was picking up a radio broadcast from somewhere nearby. He frowned. There were no human

settlements in the area, there was just one gas giant, orbited by several moons with varying degrees of atmosphere. It couldn't be from a Dalek ship, as the transport was set to scan for them

automatically.

'What is it?' he asked the hovering, metallic drudger whose job it was to control the ship's systems.

'We are intercepting a long-range radio transmission from the

third moon.'

'Let me hear it.'

'Complying.'

There was a flurry of soft beeps as the drudger translated the message and fed it out of the ship's speakers. There was a crackle, and then Alby's blood ran cold.

Dalek scout mission reporting from Gamma sector... Essential

mineral recovered on uninhabited moon. Recommend slaves be sent immediately to initiate mining protocols. Dalek scout mission

complete, I will now make arranged rendezvous with mother ship...'

The message ended. Alby told the ship to replay the message, and he listened again while manually scanning for any signs of a Dalek saucer in the vicinity. There was nothing.

'Can you tell me how many of those things are down there?' he

asked the drudger. After a moment the ship replied.

'Scans detect one Dalek life signature. No other forms of animal life present on the surface.'

'So it's alone?' Alby frowned. 'That doesn't sound like the usual Dalek MO.'

'Report that Dalek life signature is moving.'

'Moving? Where?'

The computer displayed the changing coordinates on the view

screen before him, blue and orange digits interspersing between the stars.

The numbers tumbled, changing at speed as the computer

replotted the Dalek's trajectory. It had left the planet's surface... and was headed Alby's way.

'What the hell is it doing? There's no ship for it to rendezvous with up here but me.' Speaking louder, he addressed the ship.

'Show me as soon as it's in range.'

The viewfinder shifted, a weird effect that rippled the carpet of stars as the ship's computer focused on the incoming enemy. The Dalek rose swiftly, the surface of the moon behind it lush with alien vegetation. It pushed through the thin, grey atmosphere, rushing out into the void towards Alby.

Alby thought fast. Wherever that radio signal was going, it wasn't destined for where this Dalek thought. It had been aimed at a close target, but there were no Dalek ships nearby. What had the message said? That this Dalek scout had found a rich vein of whatever

mineral their invasion required this month. It had recommended sending a slave detachment to mine it as soon as possible. But Alby had intercepted the message. And if that meant that he could

prevent one more enslaved planet – even if it was just a moon –

then so be it.

'Targeting and weapons to manual,' he ordered, reaching out and flicking a switch that brought up the armament display. 'I want to take this son of a bitch out myself.'

The Dalek continued to rise. It had gone radio-silent, and Alby wondered what had gone wrong. Perhaps its mother ship had been destroyed in battle. Perhaps it had fallen foul of one of those insurgents he'd been hearing tell of, brave souls on hopeless

crusades, throwing away their lives in a gesture that the Daleks wouldn't even appreciate. Whatever it was, news hadn't reached this lone Dalek. He fired off a volley of shots and watched as the Dalek neatly avoided them. It stopped in the silence of space, and he could see it considering its next move. The Dalek was checking its sensors and readers, looking for him, sizing him up. Using the 20

ship's automatic targeting system would have probably meant a

clean kill, but where was the fun in that?

Alby watched the Dalek's domed head swivel slowly round to

face him. He changed course, knowing that the creature would open fire as soon as it spotted him. He swung into evasive manoeuvres as a burst of Dalek gunfire sped past him. The ship trembled in the terrible heat. 'Enemy broadcasting radio message.'

'Oh, I bet it is,' said Alby with a harsh laugh. 'Let me hear it.'

The computer complied, and the Dalek's familiar static tones

reverberated around the cockpit.

'You will surrender,' it screeched. 'It is pointless to resist. You will

be...'

Alby cut the transmission as he felt a fizz of adrenalin building in his veins. Targeting again, he fired another volley, this time laughing in glee as a shower of sparks glanced off the metallic body. It spun several times, base-over-head, before righting itself.

The new range of anti-Dalek missiles were able to drain energy from the thing's shields. The creature was not dead but seriously weakened. And worse, Alby thought, he'd surprised it.

Suddenly the Dalek shot back at him. This time it was more

lucky, and the blast of its energy beam smashed into the ship's flank.

'Tut, tut,' Alby muttered to himself, 'you're letting yourself slip.

Get a grip now...'

He accelerated towards the Dalek, loosing a shot before pulling out and up so fast that he could feel the Gs even through the

enforced hull. Pulling upright, he looked for the Dalek, but it had disappeared from view.

'Where is it?' he shouted to the computer. 'Did I destroy it?'

'Negative,' confirmed the ship in its dull monotone. 'Enemy is still intact.'

'Dammit. Where?'

The coordinates flashed up on the screen and Alby cursed. It was on his tail, and clearly had enough juice left to launch another attack. Dropping his speed he plunged the transport downwards and pulled it back, watching as the Dalek shot into view overhead.

'Now come on,' he muttered to himself, 'you can't have that

much energy left. And even if you did, what are you going to do?

None of your sort around for light years, and I know for a fact you don't have a light-speed drive under that shell.'

The Dalek hung mutely in space. Alby waited, unable to guess

what it would try next. The only thing he could be sure of was that it

would not surrender. It would fight, but how?

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His answer came a second later as it darted out of sight of his viewfinder. A second later a flurry of blasts skittered across the front of the transport, lighting up his vision like fireworks. He hauled back, pulling away, but the ship's responses were sluggish.

The computer wailed to him about breaches in the hull.

Anger flashed through him. He wouldn't be defeated by a Dalek.

Alby Brook, brought low by one metal fiend? He didn't think so.

He fired back, but it was too late, the Dalek had moved. It rolled out of sight as the ship lurched after it.

'Damage report,' he bellowed to the computer.

'Major systems failure. Propulsion and navigation compromised.

Weapons failure imminent.'

'What?'

'Major systems...' The computer began to repeat its report.

'Shut up! Drop life support to fifty per cent and transfer all available energy to weapons. Give me more power!'

'That is not recommended...'

Alby swore and kicked the console. 'Just *do* it!'

The computer complied, and Alby felt his head go light as the

oxygen level suddenly dropped. Forcing himself to breathe evenly, he began to manipulate the targeting system again. He turned the ship to face the Dalek, which seemed to have powered down.

Hitting him had cost it badly.

It hung in space, waiting for something. *Conserving energy, more like*, thought Alby. *It's nearly out, and there's no saucer nearby to rescue it. What a damned shame*. He focused on the targeting controls. There was no way he was going to miss this shot.

The Dalek saw the volley coming and rolled deftly to the right.

As Alby swore again and struggled to get it back in his sights, he realised how close the battle had brought them to the third moon. Its bulk filled the view screen, the atmosphere creating a blue halo around their fight. He wondered just how much mineral could exist in such a tiny rock. It would take the Daleks – or rather, their slaves

– all of a month to mine it clean. Yet this Dalek appeared to be eager to sacrifice its meagre life to defend it. Which suited him fine.

Squaring his shoulders, Alby focused again. The Dalek was

speeding towards him with what little was left of its strength, barely dodging his barrage of fire.

'Object detected on collision course,' the transport's computer observed calmly.

'I know!'

'Evasive manoeuvres recommended,' it suggested in an equally

sanguine tone.

Alby tried to pull the ship up, hoping to thwart the Dalek's charge and squeeze off a kill shot in the process, but the controls were only crudely responsive. He spotted a light going on in the corner of the control console, and then another. A siren sounded and he felt yet more oxygen leech out of the cockpit. The ship had used up all its energy reserves, succumbing to the damage done by the Dalek's

first attack. There was no more power to borrow from anywhere.

It was getting difficult to breathe. Alby gasped, sucking in what oxygen he could as he struggled to make the ship respond to his commands. The Dalek loomed in the viewfinder, blotting out the stars one by one.

Collapsing back in his chair, Alby shouted at the computer.

'Engage autopilot! Do what you can...'

It was too late. There was a sickening sound of screeching metal as the Dalek impacted with the ship. Alby was thrown clear across the room

and struck his head against the floor. He clung on to a control deck as he struggled to his knees. He could feel the blood pouring down his forehead, and thought absently that it was a pity to get blood on his pristine new ship.

A cacophony of alarms broke out as he felt the transport spin over and over. The view screen was a mass of writhing colour as the craft's systems tried to make sense of what was going on.

From his prone position, Alby could see the moon flashing closer and closer as the transport tumbled towards it. Brilliant orange flames scudded along the view screen as the ship forced itself through the planet's atmosphere. And then they were through,

careening downwards as gravity became terrible reality.

Alby shut his eyes, bracing himself firmly against the floor

between two sealed equipment cabinets. Despite the raging sirens still desperately signalling the ship's imminent doom, he felt a strange calm. Sure, this wasn't how he had thought he'd meet his end, but at least it would be quick. At least he'd died fighting, even if it was with just one solitary Dalek. And, rather fittingly for a spy, it was unlikely anyone would find his final resting place, way out here on a tiny, uninhabited moon.

The impact hurled Alby across the floor. The ship battered across the planet's surface, its nose lifting upward, slamming him back against the floor. He clung on to whatever he could get hold of as the ship tore its way to a halt. The stuttering computer explained to what percentage it had been able to negate the effects of landfall.

Something about a gravity cocoon acting as a buffer...

His head rang, but he couldn't tell if it was from concussion or the noise gurgling all around him.

Winded, bruised all over and not entirely conscious, he tried to look out of the view screen but his vision was blurred. There

seemed to be water pouring off the front of the ship, but he could also see a blue sky and what seemed to be the tops of trees rushing past below them. Had they hit the ground? Alby didn't think so, but he also didn't feel as if they were still hurtling downwards.

Something must have softened the initial impact. Water? Had

they landed in a sea?

His speculation was cut short as he saw the ground rushing at

them again. This time the transport really was going to hit and, even though Alby could feel that it had lost velocity, he knew the landing was going to be hard. The ship was closer to the ground this time, though. He looked around, spying the escape hatch in the roof that would usually serve as the ejector seat's exit. It was a few feet away from him, level with his feet – the ship was still upside down.

Forcing himself to move, he dragged himself towards the hatch, struggling to activate the door. It wouldn't budge. Glancing up, he saw how close the ship was to the ground and launched a last-ditch effort. He planted his feet against the ship's wall and thrust his shoulder into the lever. It moved, suddenly, wrenching the door out of his hand and into the air beyond. With a metal screech, the door parted company with the hull and spun away on its own trajectory, felling a tree just beside them.

Pulling himself to the opening, Alby pushed his shoulders and

head into the hole. The wind outside deafened him immediately and sucked the remaining air out of his lungs. He couldn't see, but knew from the impact of trees crashing around him that the ship must be about to make landfall. He had no choice. Die in the transport or die falling to the ground, what difference did it make? But if he pushed himself out now, he was taking the control back that he'd lost when the Dalek rammed his ship.

He propelled himself forward with his feet for the last few inches, tipping himself into oblivion. Alby felt himself grabbed by the wake created by the ship's fall and was buffeted like a balloon. Bouncing on the air currents, he remembered learning to free fall as part of his initiation. They'd had state-of-the-art aquachutes and the best military training, but it had still been one heck of a thrill. Alby smiled at the thought of the party they'd had afterwards, all buzzing with how it had felt.

Plunging headlong through the air they'd been free. Tangibly

alive, and terrified.

It was night and it was cold. Alby tried to open his eyes and

discovered that one was swollen shut. The other may well have

been blind, because there was no light and nothing to see except a faint reddening of the sky from a fire burning into the night. He shut his eye again, and knew nothing for a very long time.

It was day and it was cold. Alby came round again, this time

sensible enough to realise that he was lying face down beside a tree.

His bruised eye let him see very little. Torn branches and foliage were littered around him, which told him what had ‘broken’ his fall.

He tried to move – there was pain, but none of it very focused.

His replacement legs appeared to be intact, as was the rest of him.

His right shoulder was swollen, but he could move it – a little.

Struggling upright, Alby leaned against the damaged tree, his breath coming in short bursts. His lungs hurt. Then he realised that his lack of easy breathing was not external, but internal. Slowly, he opened his shirt and looked down to see a mass of bruises forming from his sternum to his chest. Perfect.

He looked around him. Everything was quiet – no rustling in the bushes, no birds in the trees. He remembered what the transport’s computer had said when it first detected the Dalek life sign. No other animal life. Alby shuddered. A world this lush with vegetation but without evolving animals? Something seemed very wrong with that. Suddenly Alby remembered waking in the night. He had been too out of it to recall very much but remembered the glow in the sky. Fire – and it could only have come from the crash. He tried not to think about how devastating an uncontrolled fire could be to his transport. It was his only way off this moon.

He pushed himself into a standing position, holding on to the tree while he assessed how he felt. One ankle felt fragile, but apart from the shoulder – which luckily did not feel dislocated – that appeared to be it. Alby kept testing each part of himself gently, convinced that there must be some other, more severe, injury. He couldn’t quite believe that he’d survived such a violent fall.

Pushing away from the tree, Alby took a tentative step forward.

His ankle held. Of course, he had no useful idea of where he should be heading.

Taking a deep, shuddering breath, Alby picked a direction and

struck out. The air was humid but not baking hot. He was thirsty, but saw nothing to drink from. Come to think of it, his tongue felt swollen in his mouth, and Alby assumed he must have bitten it

during his fall. Could have been worse – he could have swallowed it all together. The foliage was dense but traversable, seemingly devoid of anything with prickles or burrs – but then, he supposed, the plant life was top of the food chain here. No need to ward off predators of the herbivorous kind. He wondered how such a world 25

pollinated its plants. A gust of warm wind rushed past his ears, giving him the only possible answer.

Alby passed a large rock formation which seemed more akin to

the landscape of moons he was more used to seeing. It was large and craggy, stabbing into the air, its sharp spines of naturally occurring outcrop too formidable to climb. He thought of Suz –

she'd probably be able to tell him exactly what caused such strange formations, why they were arranged as they were and how long they had been there. The thought dulled his heart and he stared blindly down at his feet, the pounding pain in his head suddenly stronger for a moment.

If he wasn't able to get off this rock, he'd never catch up with Suz, never have to find out what she knew and then whether he

could kill her. Maybe it was better that he'd ended up this way.

Being here, unable to chase her down – well, that solved the

problem of sorting out his own feelings about her, didn't it? He could spend the rest of his days just making up the truth for himself.

Or perhaps just bypassing it altogether. Here, on this little rock in the middle of nowhere, the Dalek invasion could have never

happened. It was just him and the plants, from here until eternity...

He slumped against a tree and leaned his head back against the coarse bark. Despite everything, was that what he wanted? Not

really. He wanted to see her face again, he realised. He needed to know why she was doing it, what she really knew. He needed to

know if he had really misjudged her character so badly. Had he really fallen in love with a genocidal maniac?

Shutting his eyes, he took a deep breath and caught the scent of something on the wind. The smell of charring, of something having burnt. It hung in his nostrils as the wind died, and Alby knew he was on the right track. Squaring his shoulders against the persistent pain, he moved on.

He came to the crash site some hours later, exhausted and aching even more. He'd rested frequently but not enough, and as the day's short light fell he had pushed onwards at as swift a pace as he could manage. Now it was almost pitch black, but there were still small fires burning in the scrub around the downed ship. He couldn't tell exactly what shape it was in, but there was enough small debris around to tell him it was bad.

Wearily, he settled for the night beneath a tree that seemed to have escaped the worst of the crash, and watched the last flames flickering in the dark until sleep finally shut his eyes.

It was bad. The best of the situation was that the ship had come to 26

rest upright, on its belly, but other than that there was little with which Alby could console himself. At first light he had struggled back to his feet, even stiffer than before, and tried to shake away the dew that had settled on him. The silence made him jittery,

especially when he looked at his ship, the beaten mess of metal a weirdly sinister man-made hulk against the incessant green of the landscape.

He knew he didn't have a hope. It was surely mangled beyond

repair. Perhaps, if he'd had a team of mechanics, an unlimited supply of parts and a lot of heavy lifting machinery, just maybe in a few years they could have got it working again. But as it was...

But perhaps he could get the radio working, send a mayday out

into the void. And at least he could salvage some supplies – medical equipment, rations, something to offer him shelter.

He crossed the clearing, checking over the debris as he went. Best to check that nothing vital was strewn around in the grass. Anyway, there might be things he could refit.

Getting inside the ship was no problem. The hull had ruptured

badly, ripping a seam in the side that reached from the cockpit to the small (and now mostly empty) cargo hold. Alby stopped to

check out the damage. He noted with some little satisfaction that a streak of blue marked exactly where the Dalek had hit. *Hope you felt the burn when we hit the atmosphere*, he thought to himself.

Gingerly, he moved inside the wreck. His poor, beautiful ship, ripped to shreds. The floor was mostly intact, and one of the control chairs was still firmly in place, but the view screen was cracked right across. It was odd to see the console dead – since taking command of the transport, he'd always had something active up

there. The drudger was smashed beyond repair.

He moved to the command chair and brushed away a smattering

of broken glass before sitting down and resting his elbows on the console.

'Poor girl,' he said softly, patting the pockmarked metal, 'you never had a chance.'

He looked out of the shattered view screen. And stopped, heart in his mouth. A few yards from the front of the ship, on its side in the grass, lay the Dalek. It was motionless, upright but tilting to one side, ugly black charring painted across its shell. It wasn't moving.

Alby lowered his head until he could only just see it, and waited, watching carefully. The Dalek didn't move. It must have been

thrown free of the wreckage when the transport hit the ground.

From where he sat, it looked to Alby as if it were dead, but it was always so hard to tell. How better to play dead than present nothing

but a metal shell? But it must have seen him cross the clearing. If not dead then why hadn't it shot him?

After several more minutes of silent observation, Alby twisted in his

seat and moved quietly out of the cockpit. The Dalek still didn't move, rooted like some weird ornament in an overgrown garden.

Alby exited the ship and moved into the open, encouraged by its persistent silence. As he got closer, it was easy to see the damage –

part of its base was crushed, presumably by the impact of the crash.

Even if it was still alive, it couldn't survive for long.

He crossed the last few feet of ground slowly, but the Dalek was completely motionless. Standing over it at last, Alby contemplated his foe. Even in death it was menacing, its scarred metal shell as ugly as what he knew dwelt inside. He wondered how long the

mutant had been imprisoned in this tin skeleton. With a Dalek, age was impossible to gauge -- and to them, utterly irrelevant.

Suddenly the Dalek's eye stick spun towards him, its

unmistakable voice shattering the moon's eerie silence.

'You are an enemy of the Daleks. You will be exterminated.

Exterminate!'

Alby dropped to all fours and pushed himself into a desperate

roll, heart hammering wildly. *Never underestimate your enemy, Alby old lad*, he reminded himself sternly.

An instant later, and no shot had been fired. Alby peered over the tuft of grass he'd rolled behind. The thing hadn't moved – it was still in the prone position where it had come to rest. Frowning to himself, Alby stood up again, moving into its sight-line but ready to drop into cover at any moment. He could feel the Dalek looking at him dispassionately.

'You will be –'

'Well come on then, if you're going to,' he interrupted.

There was no reply. The Dalek merely lay there in the long grass, watching him carefully.

Alby looked around his feet, and finding a small rock he picked it up, flinging it at his foe. It hit the Dalek full on the head with a bong!,

then ricocheted off into the foliage. The Dalek remained still.

‘I thought so. You’re damaged, aren’t you?’ he asked, unable to keep the glee from his voice. ‘Your gun isn’t functioning – if it was I’d be dead by now.’

Alby moved forward again, closer this time, close enough to aim a swift kick at the Dalek’s crumpled base. He didn’t know why he did it, except that he wanted to confirm that he’d got one of these things at his mercy, one of these things that had helped bring the galaxy to its knees. His foot reverberated against the Dalek’s shell, 28

and as it did so he saw the creature’s sucker move. It was fast, but Alby was faster, throwing himself backwards as it came towards him and rolling again, out of reach. He moved to a safe distance and pushed himself up on his elbows, breathless.

‘Well,’ he said. ‘Not completely dead yet, then. I shall just have to keep my distance, won’t I? That’s fine – I’ve got plenty to be getting on with.’

Getting to his feet, he brushed himself down. He should probably interrogate this thing to see if it had anything useful to say, but he needed to try to get his radio in the ship working first. The Dalek wasn’t dead and, although it was a joy to see it so incapacitated, there was every chance that if its sucker was working, so too was its internal transmitter. The last thing he needed was a mother ship to arrive, searching for its stray comrade. Alby wanted to be well clear of the moon by then.

Turning his back on his enemy, Alby went back to the prone

transport to begin work.

He got a few hours of repairs in before the light began to fail. Alby would have liked to have continued working, but also wanted to preserve the emergency torches he had found. Instead, he used the last minutes of daylight to gather enough wood for a fire. It was dry enough to burn swiftly, and he was glad of the warmth it gave off as he sat eating one of the energy sweets he’d dug out of the hold.

Alby knew he would have to be sensible – it could be days or even weeks before he was found and, since he had no way of knowing

which, if any, of the moon’s plants were edible, he’d have to rely on the supplies he had with him.

He sat staring into the crackling fire, oddly aware of the Dalek lying prone in the grass just ahead of him. As he concentrated on his meal, he could see the thing out of the corner of his eye, still, silent, and yet – he sensed – watchful. He wondered what it was thinking.

Was it afraid that it would die here slowly? Was it hungry? He turned.

'What do you things eat, anyhow?' There was no answer. Alby

shrugged and took a mouthful of his energy sweet. 'Well, you're not missing out on much with these things, I'll grant you that.'

Silence prevailed for several more minutes, and Alby's thoughts turned once again to Suz. He didn't understand how she could work with these things. It wasn't just that they were the enemy – though that, for him, was more than enough.

It was their sheer alien-ness. How could you ever hope to relate to something this different? He was sure Suz was capable of great compassion – but for one of these metal monsters? How did that 29

work?

'You ever heard of the Angel of Mercy?' he asked, without much hope of an answer.

'The Angel of Mercy... is typical of human fools,' came the slow response.

Alby turned in surprise. He hadn't expected an answer. Taking

another bite of his rations, he contemplated the Dalek again.

'What do you mean, fools?' he asked. The Dalek was silent for a long time.

'She betrays her own kind and does not realise it. She watches people die, and it is she that has ordered their deaths.'

Alby stood, scuffing the already scuffed toe of his boot into the soil. 'She doesn't have any choice,' he said.

'She could have refused, and died. But she wanted to live. A

coward. Humans are inferior. Her life would have meant nothing.'

'Really? The Daleks don't have some special interest in Suz? It was

just coincidence they chose her for this dirty work?'

The Dalek was silent. Alby sat down again and continued eating.

'So why are you here, then?' he asked, finally. 'The Dalek saucer forgot you, did it?'

That seemed to have piqued the creature's temper, because there was some clumsy attempt at movement. Alby watched it try to

struggle upright, and fail.

'My ship will return,' it said.

'Course it will.' Alby said, with a mirthless laugh. 'I'm sure you're of the utmost value to the Dalek Emperor. It's not as if there are thousands of you tin soldiers, is it? He knows every one of you by... I don't know, what would he know you by? Dalek no. 1? No.

2? Or maybe no. 45,934?'

'Silence!' screeched the Dalek, trying to move once more.

'Offended you, did I, Tin Man? Life's not fair, is it?' Finishing the last of the energy sweet, Alby threw the wrapper into the fire and retreated beneath the ship's bulk, throwing down a blanket and using his own arm for a pillow.

He slept fitfully and got up when the first rays of dawn broke the cold pall of night. He was stiff from a night on the damp ground, but got up eager to begin the repairs. If he could only get the radio working, there was every chance he'd be able to get a message far enough out into space to be heard. Unlike the Dalek forces, the loss of an operative would not go unnoticed. Or so he hoped, anyway.

The Dalek was still in the same position as he'd left it last night, although he was vaguely amused to see the sheen of dew that had gathered on it during the early hours. Aided by the morning sun, it 30

gave the thing a softer look. It hardly seemed menacing at all, in fact, battered and off-kilter and a bit bereft. Could Daleks get rusty?

'Morning,' he called with mock cheeriness. Alby wondered if it was asleep, but its head turned slowly towards him. Maybe it had been awake all night, contemplating – what? Its mortality? Alby snorted at the thought. More likely it had spent the time trying to send another

message to its ship. If it was out there somewhere, which he seriously doubted.

Alby began work on the radio array. It was a mess, but not as bad as the rest of the ship. As the hours passed, he was reasonably sure he was getting somewhere – he had a basic grasp of machinery,

though mechanics were definitely not his first love. As the sun reached its zenith he stopped for a break, exhausted, and clambered down from the ship. The Dalek still stood there, helpless, pathetic.

Was it feeling desperate now?

He walked as closely as he dared, and stood with one hand in his pocket as he chewed another energy sweet from his sparse stash.

The Dalek moved its head slightly, as if disgruntled at his attention, and flexed its sucker in an attempt to be threatening. Alby ignored this, and dropped to the ground to sit in front of it, cross-legged.

'So,' he began, conversationally. 'This whole "conquer-the-

universe" business. What's the point of that?'

Silence followed, until Alby picked up a stone and bounced it off the metal skin.

'Come on,' he said, 'you haven't got anything else to do. So tell me.'

'Humans are inferior,' the Dalek said at last. 'Daleks are the superior beings.'

'That's it, huh?'

'It is all the reason that is required.'

'Funny. I've heard your broadcasts before, and I always thought you were hiding something. But that's really it. You just believe you're superior to us.' Alby finished his energy sweet and stood up, ready to return to his repairs.

'You believe the same,' said the Dalek, suddenly. 'Humans

believe they are superior to Daleks.'

Alby turned. 'Yeah, I suppose we do. But the difference is, if you hadn't attacked, we would have left you alone. We wouldn't have

ransacked your colonies and mass-murdered your people.'

'This is still the case now?' The Dalek asked.

Alby paused. Good question. Humans would love to believe they

were the peaceful victims, but if the tables were turned after such a conflict? 'Probably not,' he answered. He looked at the prone

transport and then back at the Dalek. 'Is your radio still working?'

he asked, suddenly.

The Dalek was silent.

'I don't think it is, is it? In which case, you must be in a pretty miserable state of mind right now. Stuck here, no fellow Daleks, no means to repair yourself or escape.'

'The original transmission will suffice,' said the Dalek shortly.

'You hope,' said Alby.

'Hope is a human emotion. Daleks do not require hope.'

'What do Daleks know about human emotion? I thought the point

was you don't suffer any of them.'

'The Angel of Mercy brings hope to the human slaves. This is

what makes them work efficiently. In that respect, hope is the only human emotion relevant to the Daleks.'

Alby was quiet for a few moments. 'So that's what Suz is doing, is she?' he asked. 'Bringing hope to the afflicted. Well, well, well.'

'Hope is a pointless waste of energy,' the Dalek said. 'You are hoping that you can repair your vehicle.'

'Actually no. I know I can repair it, that's a big difference.'

'Then you hope that you will survive long enough to escape this moon.'

'Again –'

‘This is hope. You cannot be assured of your success. But until you have failed utterly you will keep trying. This is hope. It is a waste of energy.’

‘Not if it works,’ Alby pointed out.

‘You will have already expended pointless emotional energy that keeps you active on this task.’

‘And what about you?’ Alby asked. ‘You are hoping that your

ship will return. You are hoping that you will not be left to die alone on this moon.’

‘Daleks do not experience hope.’

‘I don’t believe you. Are you seriously telling me that you’re sitting there, not even thinking about the possibility of being found?’

The Dalek was silent.

‘How can you understand what Suz – what the Angel of Mercy

does if you’ve not experienced it yourself?’

‘It is not necessary for a Dalek to understand. It is only necessary for –’

‘Yes, yes, I know. But I think you do understand. Even if the rest of you things don’t, I think you do. Because here you are, stuck down in the mud and dying. And if you’re not rescued soon, you 32

will cease to be. You’re telling me that it makes no difference to you whether your ship gets your message or not?’

The Dalek remained silent once more. Alby stuck his hands in his pockets and turned to walk away.

‘Suit yourself. I’ve got a radio to fix.’

From the cockpit of the ship, Alby could see the Dalek’s head

moving to and fro. No doubt it could hear the crackling of the radio as he attempted to test his repairs. God knew, they were only

shoddy bodge-jobs, but all he needed to do was send a message to the nearest space-buoy. From there, his SOS would hopefully be relayed to Earth Alliance Security and his boss, Tanlee. Alby had had enough of

sitting on this silent moon with only a crippled Dalek for company.

The radio thrummed as he pushed the on button again. There was definitely something there, but how strong the signal was he

couldn't guess. Leaning forward, he spoke into the microphone, issuing a mayday. He kept his voice low enough that the Dalek

couldn't hear his passwords or the encryption code. Having sent the message, he patted the battered console and slipped back out of the cockpit, dropping to the ground. He'd hear it from outside if

someone sent a message in reply.

Idly, he bounced a few small stones off the Dalek. It swivelled its head angrily, but could do nothing to retaliate.

'Hands and arms are pretty useful after all, aren't they?' he asked.

'You will be exterminated,' replied the Dalek, in curiously

measured tones. It sounded weary.

'Oh, yeah? You and whose army?' He dropped to the ground

again, pulling up a blade of grass and chewing on it thoughtfully.

'So, it's the Angel of Mercy's job to give the workers hope, is that right?'

'Correct.'

'You understand that hope is a positive thing for humans?'

'It is the positive nature of hope that makes them work.'

'Right. I get it.' He sighed. Poor Suz. She'd thought she was

doing these people a favour, and all she'd done was prolong their suffering – and, no doubt, her own.

'Why do you ask about the Angel of Mercy?' the Dalek

demanded.

'No reason.' Alby stared down at the mangled piece of grass in his hand. 'Just wondering why she would help you.'

‘She understands that we are superior. That we must be served.’

‘Is that so? That doesn’t sound like the Suz I –’ He cut himself off. No sense in giving information away, even if this Dalek was on 33

the verge of death.

There was a loud crackle from the radio inside the cockpit. Alby leapt to his feet with a shout of glee.

‘A-ha! There we go, sucker!’ He ran to the opening, and though still aching, swung himself up into the transport to grab the

microphone from its cradle. The message began to repeat itself, and Alby recognised the voice as Tanlee’s.

He knew Tanlee was going to be less than impressed that he had crashed the brand-new ship.

‘Er... hello, Mr Tanlee!’ he shouted into the mic, expecting a barrage of dry sarcasm.

‘Ah, Brook. So you’ve managed to crash that top-of-the-range

ship already. How predictably resourceful of you. I suppose we shall have to find you another one.’ Tanlee’s voice droned through the static.

‘It wasn’t really my fault, Mr Tanlee,’ Alby found himself

offering rather pathetically. ‘You can mostly blame the Dalek that’s stranded here with me.’

‘You’ve got a Dalek there with you? What, still alive?’

‘Er... well, just about, sir. Pretty beaten up, though. It can’t exterminate me. Or do anything else, for that matter... as long as you don’t get too close. It’s quite chatty, though.’

‘Really.’ Tanlee’s interest was clearly aroused. ‘Listen, we’re trying to get a ship out to you as soon as possible, but it’s a bit tricky. There’s a Dalek saucer ploughing around out there.’

‘I was worried you were going to say that. The Dalek here thinks its ship will be coming back for it.’

Tanlee suddenly sounded a little disapproving. ‘Um, I’m not sure it’s

such a good idea for you to be talking to the enemy, Brook. You never know what you might give away inadvertently. I take it

you've not been drowning your sorrows with it.'

Tanlee knew far too much about Alby's reputation for drinking.

'No, sir. I just thought it could give me some information about Suz... Susan Mendes... sir.'

'Interesting. If it's talkative, maybe we should bring it in. A prisoner of war could be useful...'

'If it survives long enough,' said Alby, glancing out at the Dalek as its eyestalk twitched slightly.

'Understood. I'd love to chat, but I suppose I'll have to brief the retrieval team and get you out of there, Brook.'

'Well, that would be nice, sir.'

'Wouldn't it?' A burst of static obscured Tanlee's following

words. Suddenly panicking, Alby attempted to adjust the tuning 34

controls. 'Say again, sir! Say again!'

He glanced at the Dalek once more. It seemed to be staring right at him, almost as if it were pleased that something seemed to be going wrong.

Suddenly, static buzzed back at Alby, but through it he only

heard a few detached phrases. 'Sit tight' was one of them. Great, thought Alby, that would never have occurred to me. Then after a few moments, the signal cleared.

'... but you must know what your chances are,' said Tanlee

sombrely. He did. Alby signed off and climbed out of the ship, almost calmly. They were on their way, but there was still a Dalek saucer out there somewhere, and maybe it was heading his way too.

Even if Tanlee's people did get to him first, Alby would still be back where he had started – on a suicide mission to find Suz. And he still didn't know what he'd find when he reached her – a traitor or a gullible pawn. And yet, under that clear sky with the breeze streaming

through the trees, he thrilled with sudden excitement. In part, it was to know that things had now been set in motion. But whatever the odds and obstacles stacked against him, Alby Brook had something inside him that made him stronger than the poor, dying Dalek in front of him.

He had hope.

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Private Investigations

Ian Farrington

'... and again, thank you very much to Professor Honchar for that enlightening presentation. Now, before we move on, a quick

announcement. Affiliates with code-six passes, please make sure your registration forms have been handed in before you leave today...'

Dr Colem Litchem wasn't really listening. He was the next speaker due up. Next to present his pitch. That was right, wasn't it? He checked the itinerary for the fiftieth time. Yep, he was next: the schedule listed him after Honchar and before the lunch break. Was he ready? Colem ran through his opening address one last time. He skimmed over it quickly, mumbling a few words.

'Ladies and gentlemen... SK-12... with your help... most

remarkable chapters... Dalek Wars... could learn so much more...'

He wasn't convinced he was ready. He'd have to wing some of it, but try not to be too flabby– he'd done a timed read the previous night and his speech had come in at 27 minutes. That was seven over the limit. And he'd rushed towards the end, trying to fit it all in.

'Thank you, thank you.' The man with the bad moustache had

finished his announcement and was trying to quieten the auditorium.

'Now, our last speaker before we break for lunch is a Dr Litchem from the Landaluze Corporation, a commercial research institute based here on Newlandis.' He took a step away from the lectern. 'Dr Litchem...?'

The applause began slowly, but picked up as Colem left his seat and climbed up to the podium. Slipping on the top step, he dropped his datapad and it clanged on the stage. He heard giggles from the room,

but simply picked the machine up and placed it on the lectern.

Looking around, he realised that he couldn't see half the audience.

The lights were too bright in his face.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' he began. The front few rows could

probably see him sweat. 'The planetoid SK-12 is a fascinating place, and requires further investigation...'

* * *

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'Do you know what we need, Colem?' Inigo had asked one

lunchtime when they were alone in the office.

'A holiday?' said Colem, raising his eyebrows.

'Very funny.' She lit a cigarette and took a draw before

continuing. 'No, what we need is to make a pitch to the university.'

Colem didn't understand. 'What kind of pitch?'

'For money. We tell them we need money and what it's for. And

they give it to us. We could tell them about the Doctor – that'd get their attention.'

The Doctor had become something of a running joke between

them, but Colem got what she meant immediately.

It was a hare-brained scheme, even for Inigo, but over the next few weeks, as things started to come together, they began to believe it might work. It was risky, as Colem kept saying: universities were not renowned for being fans of commercial companies whose

raison d'être was to sell academic research for profit. But, if the pitch was right, they could come to a deal. The uni puts up the funding to allow Landaluze Corp. to continue its archaeological, textual and geological researches into planetoid SK-12. The

resulting paper is then co-credited to *both* institutions. They both get

to profit from it: the university uses the paper to attract a higher class of student; the company, to attract more clients.

Colem had assumed it would be a direct approach. That first

lunchtime when Inigo had mooted the idea, he'd googled a contact number and bio-ID. But Inigo had known better.

'No, the university has special weekends,' she'd said.

'Symposiums, they call them, but they're more like trade fairs.

People come along and pitch ideas to them. "Take me on as a

visiting professor in crustaceans." "Sponsor us to start a university handball team." That kind of thing. We'll go along and ask for funding.'

On the morning of the speech, Inigo gave Colem a kiss on the

cheek. They'd been friends for eight years and she'd never once kissed him. 'Good luck,' she said.

They both knew what she meant: the company hadn't had any

research published for three years. They *needed* this one.

Ladies and gentlemen. The planetoid SK-12 is a fascinating place, and requires further investigation. Based on our initial research, we believe that, many, many years ago, SK-12 was the scene of one of the most remarkable chapters in the Dalek Wars. What I am about to talk you through is simply one small sequence of events in the larger context. With your help, we could learn so much more. The information is out there, but more funding is needed to properly 37

research and investigate this area of history. The Landaluze

Corporation is proposing a dual initiative, a partnership with the university, in order to more fully understand the planet's

significance.

SK-12 is a relatively small planet orbiting its star at one and a half billion kilometres. It has been devoid of life for many centuries

– since the last Dalek War, to be precise – and is now largely ruined cities and deserted woodlands. Before the Daleks came, the planet was

known as Malite. Six hundred and fifty years ago, its society was at level seven: rudimentary space travel was a fairly recent development, but had established itself; there was a planet-wide democracy; and contact with off-worlders was beginning to occur, though was rare. The majority of the population – a census indicates as much as 85 per cent – lived in the city near the equator.

Then... the Daleks came. Solar systems quickly fell to the

invasion. Unbelievable as it may sound now, no one on Malite had ever heard of the Daleks. Here is an audio file found in an archive of one of Malite's moons, Kloeden.

NEWSREADER

'... as long as the judiciary agrees,'

Premier Mercado said in his opening address to the

legislative body yesterday. Principal Second Dessel

thanked the premier for his cross-party support, but

warned that it was his responsibility to bring the

government to account. In other news, the water supply

crisis is reaching its end. That's according to the head of

the Malite Amenity...

Inaudible voice talking off-mic.

NEWSREADER

... and... and we're receiving

reports of a disturbance near the moon of Haiduk. We...

we don't have any firm details as yet. Perhaps we could

go over to our Haiduk correspondent... No, I'm being told

that that's not possible... what? ... No... I see... It seems

that we do have a live feed from one of our satellite

installations orbiting Haiduk... there's a signal being

picked up...

Garbled static message begins to play.

NEWSREADER

(*Over this*) Yes, as you can hear,

the signal is rather hard to make out. And we don't...

we're not quite sure what it is. Just to recap, reports have

reached us that some kind of disturbance has broken out

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near the moon of Haiduk. Within the last few minutes –

The static resolves itself.

VOICE

All humanoid life forms beware!

The invasion of the Daleks has begun!

That metallic, robotic voice you just heard was a Dalek. It seems odd, doesn't it? Hearing a Dalek voice after all this time...

They were under siege for days. Eventually, the Daleks enslaved the entire planet, with millions losing their lives. But, compared to other Dalek invasions on record, Malite was a drawn-out affair.

Rather than sweeping all before them, the Daleks battled for nearly a week before they gained total control.

Why? What made Malite almost unique in this regard?

Early research points to one major factor. An enigmatic stranger, known only as 'the Doctor'.

With the help of the university, we can follow up this strand.

From what scraps of evidence we already have to hand, we can

reconstruct the events and see the part played in Malite's history by this Doctor –and, as I'm going to discuss, it's a fascinating story.

But we must remember at every opportunity that we're dealing with limited resources. History isn't necessarily written by the winners, but by those with access to whatever has survived the ravages of time. The Doctor first appears in the chain of evidence a few days before the attack. The following is an extract from some notes a colleague of mine, Dr Inigo Tate, unearthed in a long-forgotten archive on Malite during our recce of the planet. The notes log the first time this 'Doctor' came into contact with Malite's premier, Yellesh Mercado. I say 'Doctor', as one of the major pieces of information we're still unsure of is his real name. These

handwritten notes were daily minutes recorded by an assistant of Mercado, T. H. Sassing.

Day: 16/33/315

Minutes assembled by: T. H. Passing

Premier's duties:

AM meeting:

a)

Principal Second Dessel; bi-weekly forum.

PM meetings:

a)

Mr Longfaith, managing editor of Malite State

Television; lunch appointment.

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b) Various reps from legislative body; three-hour

conference.

I should point out that the report goes into much detail about these meetings – an invaluable historical record, of course, but not relevant to our present investigation. The minutes get interesting for our benefit when a break in Mercado's second meeting is recorded.

Let me read this verbatim...

Additional:

Meeting with Mr Longfaith interrupted @ 38 minutes when a

man (the Doctor) gained entry to the Premier's suite. He refused to show any identification documentation, and demanded to see

the Premier; said he had invaluable information for the Premier.

After consultation with Premier Mercado, the security team took the Doctor through. The Doctor claimed the planet would be

invaded within a few days by something called the Darliks.

The notes rather quaintly spell it d-a-r-l-i-k. Of course, having never encountered the Daleks, how else would it be written down?

We actually have some very rough video footage of this meeting that Bassing describes. It's a copy, found – for an unknown reason –

in the cache file of a Malite army spacecraft. Could we have the playback please? Thank you.

As you can see, it's from a security camera in Mercado's office –

and unfortunately it's mute. We just have to rely on what Bassing recorded at the time. The thin man standing next to the left of the desk – our best guess is that that is actually T. H. Bassing. The man sat down is, of course, Premier Mercado. Look at him – even sitting down you can see the man was huge. Note his elaborately styled hair, his broad shoulders, his proud, bulbous nose. Surely no one was ever in any doubt when the Premier was in the room.

But look here... can we pause and zoom in please?

Yes, look – this man is the Doctor. Sticks out a bit, doesn't he?

This footage is black and white, of course, which just emphasises that he doesn't belong: contrast everyone else's sombre, dark

clothes with the Doctor's light jacket and hat, his patterned sweater, his umbrella. It would be a wonderful resource to have this footage in colour and with sound, wouldn't it? Well, perhaps that footage does exist –somewhere in the ruins of Malite. This clip, as 1 said, is a copy. It will take a full-scale exploration of the planet to unearth the real, full history.

And what would that exploration tell us? It would give us a better understanding of this planet, and what role it played in the Dalek War. We've been able to piece together clues and odd fragments, 40

but we are only just starting to skim the surface of these

fascinatingly deep waters.

It seems that the Doctor was believed, or at least humoured.

Although we have been unable to trace too many of Malite's media resources, we know that the Doctor appeared on the planet's state television station numerous times over the following two or three days. Malite still had print media, and the television listings in a newspaper dated 16/33/316 – the day after the Doctor's meeting with Mercado – refer to him twice. *On The Beat*, which seems to be a news and current affairs programme, interviewed the Doctor in the morning for around two minutes; later that day, he pops up as a guest on *Never The Same Answer* – a satirical comedy show.

Unfortunately, we have little evidence for what he actually said, or how he took part in these programmes. But, from references in the newspaper dated 16133/317, we can infer that the Doctor was seen as a kind of preacher or mystic. And it seems that this trust was carried through to the government too.

Here's Sassing again, and his minutes from three days after the Doctor turned up. Unfortunately his notes from the intervening time are, as far as we know, not extant.

Day: 16/33/318

Minutes assembled by: T. H. Bussing

Premier's duties:

One meeting: a day-long conference with Mr Doctor,

Principal Second Dessel and Admiral General Eprahs, the

primary head of the military.

Mr Doctor gave a presentation (see attached video file)...

Suffice to say, that file is lost.

... on the Daleks (a race of mechanically housed aliens). He

claimed they are famed for ruthlessness and savagely; urged

great caution. Mr Doctor refused to reveal his sources.

Premier Mercado said Mr Doctor must be an alien himself.

Mr Doctor refused to deny this.

Principal Second Dessel said he was sympathetic to the

claims, and argued that the planet's defences needed a

thorough review. Admiral General Eprahs agreed.

Mr Doctor put forward numerous suggestions: from

bolstering the planet's satellite defence ring to deploying a

greater percentage of the military in the city (see attached

data file).

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Admiral General Eprahs acknowledged Mr Doctor's

assistance and agreed to implement the changes.

Where did this Doctor get his foreknowledge? He certainly knew that the Daleks would attack. And they did – a few days later. The global defences were improved and Malice held out against the

onslaught for around 72 hours. We can find no comparable instance on record of a planet repelling the Daleks for that long.

There were most probably very heavy losses, though: we know

that much from the wider context of the Dalek War. Early research into the wars carried out over twenty years ago, when academics first began to understand the Great Catastrophe, revealed that populations in Malite's sector of the galaxy were reduced to around a tenth of their pre-war numbers.

We have various pieces of evidence from around the time of the Dalek attack: snatches of early news broadcasts, military itineraries and schedules recovered from crashed ships; scattered references in various diaries of contemporary leaders. For example, King

Alashethihen of the nearby solar system Fooann wrote in his

memoirs – unpublished until many centuries after his death – that, when the Daleks came, Malite's system 'shone as bright as an

angel, but with the severity of the devil'. Not very helpful for our purpose, but it highlights how the evidence is out there. We just have to find it. Oddly, though, none of these sources mention the Doctor. We simply have no idea where he was during the Daleks'

invasion attempt, or what he was doing. He goes missing from the story until 16/33/322 – the final day of the planet-wide siege.

When we uncovered T. H. Gassing's notes, we found – in

amongst all his minutes and timetables and the other paperwork of a personal assistant– various documents relating to the Doctor. Was Bussing just being thorough, or did he have his own reasons for monitoring the man?

The simple answer is: we don't know. But, it does help as fill in some of the gaps in his story. Sassing had kept a copy of an arrest sheet: the Doctor's, dated 16/33/322. The Doctor had been detained on the orders of Premier Mercado, who, Gassing's notes also tell us, was killed later that day when the Daleks finally landed spacecraft on the streets of Malice's capital city.

The Doctor's crime? Being a traitor. After days of trusting this bizarre man who had waltzed into their lives and correctly warned of an oncoming disaster, the officialdom of Malite turned against him. They reasoned that he could only have known about the Dalek attack if he was himself in league with the Daleks. Let me read you his official charge: 'The state does accuse Mr Doctor, first name 42

unknown, of consorting with the enemy; of being a traitor to the Premier, government and people of Malite; and of being involved in a plot to overthrow said Premier and government. This charge is legally brought under the requirements of the 16/33 Invasion Crises Act.'

Strong words, indeed. The Doctor never made it to trial, so

history has not recorded the evidence that Mercado planned to

present. But it's easy to see how they would be suspicious,

especially given their grim position. Communities turning against each

other when under siege or other dramatic situations is not rare

– history has taught us that much. The Doctor had appeared out of nowhere. We have no idea whether he arrived on Malice on a

commercial flight or by private transportation, or had been there for a while. He certainly knew a lot about the Daleks, more than

virtually anyone else in the galaxy at that time. Perhaps they were right to be suspicious of him.

No, the Doctor was never tried because later that day the Dalek assault crafts landed, and the planet fell. His notes reveal that Bassing was kept alive by the Daleks and used as a kind of token ruler of the planet – completely under their metaphorical thumb, of course, but allowed to live. He spent the next few months acting as a liaison between the Daleks and the human survivors. The

importance of his role is no doubt built up in the notes – we can perhaps allow the man some pride. But what the notes completely lack is any mention of the Doctor.

What happened to him? Was he killed during the attack? If not, where did he go? Was he actually a Dalek agent? This enigma who arrived on Malite; warned of danger to come; helped them prepare for the attack, no doubt saving many lives... and then who was turned upon and castigated. Well, we think we have the answer.

My colleagues at the Landaluze Corporation and I have done

some digging around and became very interested in a few, scattered references to ‘the Resistance’ – three alone in the Bassing papers.

This is not a newly discovered piece of evidence. The Resistance was first unearthed from the undergrowth of history by academics more than 15 years ago. However, previous studies have always

assumed that the name referred to some kind of Dalek-fighting

group.

What we’re suggesting is that it was a code name for one person

– a woman, in fact. Listen to these citings: the Resistance said it wasn’t going to allow this to happen... the Resistance was nowhere to be found... the authorities arrested the Resistance but she escaped before

charges could be brought...'

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These are examples of the Resistance being mentioned in media, history books and memoirs – and they've all been translated from various languages and dialects. Note how they each refer in the singular – if they were referring to a group or organisation,

wouldn't you have thought that at least some of them would have said, 'The Resistance were... or 'The Resistance are...'? it now appears from new research carried out by Landaluze investigators that the translations made an incorrect assumption. They inferred, for example, that the inverse-character endings of the Panil

language notified a common noun made up of constituent parts. But we now understand that it signified a feminine singular.

And note the use of 'she' in the final example. That's taken from, of all things, the personal papers of our old friend, T. H. Sassing.

And when does he make mention of the Resistance? On

16/33/318 –the very day that the Doctor held his meeting with the Premier and warned of the Dalek attack. The Resistance is not

mentioned anywhere else in any Malitian documentation.

Is it just a coincidence that we can place the Resistance on Malice only at the same time as the Doctor?

No. We believe we know exactly why this is.

The Resistance was a code name for a woman also called 'Ace'

in some contexts. This 'Ace' – which itself may be some form of pseudonym – appears in many historical narratives in and around the Malice system, going back many decades. She is often reported to have helped people, to have shown remarkable selflessness. And, in all but a few instances, she is recorded as travelling with a man called...

The Doctor.

What does this tell us? Well, from these other narratives – some of which are from other planets conquered by the Daleks – we see that the Doctor and Ace were universally seen as a force for good.

Odd, then, that on Malice the Doctor should betray the planet to the Daleks. They appear on at least six different worlds before and during the initial Dalek invasion – and, except in the version of events we learn from Bassing, they are fighting against them, not with them.

Let me read you an extract from one such case. A few days after Malite fell to the Daleks, one of its moons, Haiduk, was falling too.

The moon wasn't particularly populated – just a few dozen research scientists, we believe. They were attempting to flee the moon on a transport ship on a mission of mercy from a nearby system. The ship did getaway, thanks to the actions of its captain, who later wrote in his official report:

The last of the scientific group had boarded and we had begun to prepare to take off. We had only a short window before the moon's orbit brought us back into the Daleks' weapons' range. My second in command signalled that we could lift, but before I could command the pilot we became aware that more humans were outside the ship. We had done a full and proper head count of the scientists, so knew that they weren't part of the official roster, but we could not leave them. I went down to the cargo hold myself and opened the airlock. I saw three people – two men and a woman. One of the men, a very tall individual with the kind of large nose you see rarely see on Malitians, was pointing a gun at me.

'Order your pilot to disengage engines,' he said. 'You are under control of the Dalek Empire!'

The other man dashed forward, and attempted to wrestle the first man's gun away.

The woman shouted: ‘Doctor!’

With the man distracted, I was able to close the airlock. I

rushed back to the bridge and ordered an immediate take-off.

If a Dalek agent was on the moon, I reasoned, they must have

known where we were. I had over sixty personnel to

evacuate: that was my mission. I felt guilty about leaving the man and the woman whose actions allowed us to escape, but

as we took off I was glad to see on the aft video monitor that they had disarmed the tall man and were fleeing the area. It

appeared they were heading for some form of shelter – a tall,

blue box stationed by the landing pad’s boundary.

A tall man with a large nose? Two people, a man and woman,

attempting to stop him?

Is it really too much of a stretch for us to reconstruct what

actually happened all those years ago on and around Malite?

Premier Mercado was a Dalek traitor. The Doctor, and possibly

Ace, discovered this in the days before the invasion – that’s why Mercado had the Doctor arrested. But then they both vanish from Malite. The Premier was killed... but we only have his trusted assistant Bassing’s word on that. The Doctor? We have no idea

what happened to him. Is it too much to assume that the Doctor escaped? He certainly comes across as resourceful, resilient and robust, doesn’t he? Even in these scraps of information, these few seemingly unconnected jigsaw pieces, we see an impression of the man. His courage, his determination. Perhaps Ace helped him. We know she was on Malite at the time.

45

The Premier had been rumbled, and with the Doctor on the loose he had no option but to flee... on to the Daleks’ next target. The moon of Haiduk. But the Doctor and Ace followed, and stopped his attempts to

retain the moon's populace until the Daleks arrived.

Is this assuming too much? Are we allowing our imagination to

run away from us? Are we filling in the gaps in history too easily?

Yes. It is assuming too much. We are allowing our imagination to run away. We are filling in the gaps too easily.

Look at the evidence that's been presented today. How could he be the one person on the planet to know about the Daleks? How

could he get in to see the Premier so easily? Why was he believed so readily, by the political leaders and talk show hosts? How did he survive, when people far more resourceful and better trained were killed?

What I've presented to you today does not represent 'history'. It's one possible version of history, a slightly unbelievable version, if truth be told. A convenient joining of the dots. But it's seductive, isn't it? We all want to believe in heroes and saviours, people who'll come to save us. However, all of us here today know that that isn't good enough. We strive to understand what actually

happened.

And that's why the Landaluze Corporation needs your help. With the right resources, the right back-up, the right cooperation, we can find out so much more. The tools of archaeology, genealogy, textual analysis and hard-drive retrieval are at our disposal if we have the support. We can unearth so much of how our ancestors lived–not just on Malite, but all across the galaxy.

The Dalek Wars are still so vague in our children's history books, so nebulous. It's mostly guesswork...

Let us work together to firm up those guesses.

We've only begun to scratch the surface in researching the Dalek Wars. Planetoid SK-12 – Malite – is a primary resource, scarcely touched by archaeologists and historians. Together, we can learn so much more. Stories like the Doctor's... well, they're just that.

Stories. And, who knows, perhaps it did happen just as I've

outlined. Perhaps our guesses and assumptions and conclusions are

spot on.

Unlikely, isn't it? The Doctor's story is too convenient, too easy.

As historians, we must face up to the reality of any situation. How can we comprehend the present before we've understood the past?

We have to know how they won out. Not stories; the truth.

The Doctor coming to the rescue is an appealing idea, but also dangerous – we have to fight our battles ourselves. What if the 46

Daleks were to return? How would we cope as a society? As well as Malite? With a better investigation into our galaxy's past, we'd certainly be in a better position than we are at the present time.

At the moment, I think we'd need the Doctor to come and save

us. But, unfortunately, we must live in the real world.

Please support our project.

Thank you.

Colem finished his presentation. As he walked down from the stage, he spotted Inigo at the back of the room, giving him the thumbs up.

He took his seat and dragged the back of his hand across his

forehead to wipe away the sweat. Colem was only vaguely aware

that the man with the bad moustache was back on the stage,

announcing the break for lunch. He was already wondering whether he'd done enough...

47

Natalie's Diary Part Two

Joseph Lidster

'Holly?' The man's voice sounded in her ear. 'Can you hear me?'

She opened her eyes and, feeling something cold and metallic

under her arms, sat up quickly.

‘What happened?’

Andrew looked down at her. ‘You fell asleep at your desk. You

know, same as every night.’

Stretching her arms, she looked around their bedroom, trying to remember...

‘There was a power cut!’

He shrugged.

‘Last night! There was a power cut.’

He turned away from her and reached into the wardrobe for a

shirt. It was Tuesday so he’d be wearing the blue one. ‘Everything’s working now. I haven’t got time for breakfast.’

She shrugged. ‘Me neither. Got to get on with this essay. I’m

reading a diary by –’

‘That’s interesting,’ he said, interrupting her. ‘I’m running late for work.’

He turned back to her, smart as ever in his blue shirt, and blew her a kiss. She pretended to catch it. It was their thing. It was hardly original but it had always been their thing. Then, picking up his briefcase, he opened the door and left the apartment.

Yawning, she turned back to the monitor and opened the second

attachment.

EXTRACT BEGINS

– that the Doctor was dead.

And then we stopped talking. We stopped because Shona’s dad

was coming towards us. I looked over at the others. Ted had his hand wrapped around Shona’s mouth to stop her crying out and Ace and Hex were holding hands. They looked kind of uncomfortable.

Like it wasn’t the kind of thing they usually did. Trying to give each

other support in the same way they'd been trying to convince each 48

other that their friend could still be alive. And then Shona's... no, I'm still not ready to remember it so I'll tell you a bit more about our time in the tunnel first. Sorry.

We must have been down there for over a week. It's one thing

saying 'Let's escape the burning city in those handy underground tunnels' but, if you don't have a map or anything, you try finding the way out. Grim isn't the word. The tunnels were dark and dingy and horrible and we were terrified that we were just going round in circles. But we were alive... so every cloud and all that. We spent a few days just moving about, ignoring the rats, praying they'd ignore us and trying to find a decent hiding place or a map or something.

We'd found an old vending machine so we were living on stale

chocolate bars. I'm afraid I simply wasn't getting my recommended five fruit and veg a day. On the plus side, I was getting loads of exercise so the weight was just dropping off. There you go, always looking on the bright side, me.

One day, we found an old caretaker's office. Like everywhere else, it had been abandoned years before, but hopefully we'd be able to find a map to get us out of the city. But then, as we rifled through the old filing cabinets, and just as I was thinking life couldn't get any more mental, the pop star Tanya Kinvari appeared in the

doorway. We all just froze and looked at her. Her face was all different and wrong. Messed up. I mean I'd never been a fan of her myself, but she was plastered all over my brother's bedroom wall so I knew what she looked like. And now, there she was, standing in front of us with dead eyes and some kind of contraption on her head. Ace and Hex, who seemed to know all about this kind of

thing, told us to get back and quickly explained that she'd been turned into something called a Roboman. This meant that, basically, the real Tanya was dead and that her body was being used and

controlled! She was just standing there looking at us and all I could think about was that terrible number one she'd had for months.

Ting-a-ling, my heart goes swing! Then, she raised a gun into the air and started walking towards us. She sounded like them. Wrong.

She was chanting that we would be exterminated as she got closer and closer towards us. We just stood there, like completely stunned.

Then there was this horrible noise as a hole appeared in her stomach and she collapsed to the floor. We all turned and looked at Ace who was lowering her own gun.

'I'm sorry but she was dead,' she said. 'Get looking for a map.' I just stared at her. I couldn't believe what she'd done. It wasn't just that she'd killed Tanya Kinvari, although that was mad in itself. It 49

was the way she'd been so certain. So, well, almost uncaring. She'd just killed someone. And I wondered if that's what we all had to look forward to. She looked at me and kind of frowned then carried on looking for a map.

Later, after we'd found one, we were creeping through a tunnel that was knee-deep in really quite smelly water. I remember joking that even if the map was wrong at least we were getting a bath. Nobody laughed. It seemed that the Fulton humour wasn't quite so popular down there. Ace was leading the way, followed by Ted (who'd not really said anything all week), Shona (who was constantly close to hysteria), me (still looking on that bright side), and then Hex (quiet but pretty). In the real world, I wouldn't have spoken to someone like him because, frankly, he was out of my league. Frankly, he was fit. But that was another side effect of the invasion. All social barriers were down. The police were burning, dead pop stars were stalking underground tunnels and I was talking to the kind of guy who'd normally use the phrase 'you're like a sister to me'. As we sloshed through the water, all I wanted to do was ask him how Ace could have done that. How could she just kill someone? Figured I'd have to make small-talk first though, so I asked him where his accent was from. He told me he was from a city called Liverpool back on Earth. Then, because you know things just weren't quite mad enough, he told me that he was from the twenty-first century and that he'd spent the last few months travelling through time with Ace and their mate, the Doctor. Okay, fair enough. Then, with all the subtlety of a brick, I said 'You mentioned Ace...' He smiled and said he understood. He told me that it'd taken him a while to get used to it. One minute, your life is normal and safe... the next you're fighting to survive. He told me that Ace had been right to do what she did. The Robomen couldn't be helped. They couldn't be saved.

They were gone already. I wasn't sure whether I believed him so I think I just shrugged and we carried on.

After a few hours, we found an exit hatch. According to the map, it would lead out to the edge of the city. Of course, the map was years old so it could all be wrong and we'd find ourselves stepping out into the middle of a burning shopping centre. It was then that Ace and Hex started to argue – and, boy, could they argue. She said that now she'd brought us all to safety, she was going to go back for the Doctor. I couldn't believe it. She'd seemed so calm and safe over the last week and now, here she was totally deluding herself that this Doctor was somehow still alive. Hex completely lost it with her, telling her that the Doctor would want them to be safe and out of the city. Shona (and I was really trying not to get annoyed 50

with her) just started crying again while Ted just sat there, staring at the hatch. So, I guessed it was up to me to try and calm things down. I kept my voice level and quiet and I just said that we'd all been there. The Doctor had managed to distract the *youknowwhat* long enough for the five of us to get out of the bar but he'd been captured. I reminded them of what they'd told me. Anyone who

wasn't dead would have been turned into a Roboman. The Doctor

was dead and they needed to accept that Ace just turned on me and started shouting that I didn't understand. He couldn't be dead.

They'd keep him as a prisoner because he was their lifelong enemy or something. Apparently, he'd come to our world to save us.

Apparently, he was the hero.

I thought back to what my brother had said about the hero in the films.

But this wasn't a film. This was real and it was happening to us and I knew my mum would be sat at home thinking I was dead and I wasn't going to delay telling her I wasn't, not for anyone or anything. If Ace wanted to go back then fine but I was staying alive and I was going to keep everyone else alive no matter what. The Doctor was dead and she'd have to accept it like the rest of us.

By this point, my voice wasn't quite so quiet and calm. In fact, I'm not even sure I knew what I was saying. Everyone went quiet though. Even Shona stopped crying.

And then, the silence was broken. Two Robomen were striding

through the water towards us. Hex pushed past Ace and started

hammering at the hatch to try and get it open. As I rushed to help, we heard the Robomen getting closer. We hammered on the hatch

and our hands were bleeding and then Ace shouted over to us that she'd found a side tunnel. Hex grabbed me and pulled me into it and all five of us held our breath. The two Robomen stopped and

listened as, slowly, I peered around the corner into the main tunnel.

I could see them standing there, perfectly still in the shadows. Then, they took a step towards us and suddenly, I could see their faces. I could see his face. Terrified, I fell back against the others, snuggling to breath. Hex asked me what was wrong and I couldn't help it. I told them and I knew I shouldn't and I know it was my fault but it had only been a month since I'd seen him making a speech at his fiftieth birthday barbecue and... and it was Shona's dad. He was a dead controlled Roboman! Ace tried to grab hold of her but it was too late. Shona ran out into the main tunnel and just stood there.

Hex held me back, saying there was nothing I could do. I closed my eyes and tried to block it out as Shona called out.

Daddy.

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There was a gunshot but no scream. And, as I started to cry, the two Robomen walked towards us and –

REMAINDER OF EXTRACT MISSING

Holly closed the attachment and frowned. She picked up her mobile and, for the first time in months, called Andrew's work number.

'Andrew? It's me.'

'Oh, hi.' He sounded surprised. 'Is something wrong?'

For what felt like hours, she couldn't think of anything to say.

'Holly? What is it?'

'I just wanted... I just wondered what time you'd be home

tonight?'

She could hear him frowning. 'Same time as always. Unless I get the

chance to do some –'

And the phone went dead.

'Andrew?'

Silence.

And suddenly, Holly felt very alone.

52

Suz

Sharon Gosling

'Do you expect me to be impressed?'

Later on, when I'm back at the rock face beside Kalendorf, deep in the heart of Vega VI, I am surprised at myself. Where did the courage to utter those words come from? I try to remember feeling bold, but all I can recall is a dull shudder in my bones as I looked at our galaxy's would-be, new tin God. The Dalek Supreme, deigning to speak to me, Susan Mendes. And I was *defiant*. And it *worked*!

He – it – said I wasn't afraid. But I was. True, it wasn't simply fear that made me shake as I spoke to the image through the cold, clean shine of that screen. Just looking at that monster made me quake, the way the dome shone like the carapace of some black, creeping thing I'd more usually find under one of my rocks. But there is nothing remotely natural about a Dalek. Every part of it is sharp, dangerous, from its metal 'body' to the metallic tearing of its voice. The Daleks are ugly, and they breed nothing but ugliness.

They live only to conquer and kill. So what made me shake first was not terror. It was revulsion, repugnance – hatred. And hatred is born of fear.

What was it that made me speak out as I did? What made me so

defiant, standing there alone in that sterile room, speaking to an invader from another galaxy? It can't have been courage. That's not the Susan Mendes that I know, not the Susan Mendes that my

mother and father would recognise. The old Susan Mendes, the one from before; she was responsible, respectable. Not the sort of girl to rock the boat. She learned her trade well, did a good job – turned up

on time every day, catalogued every mineral sample she took. She was reliable. Maybe that didn't make her that happy, but you could always depend on Suz. Never drove too fast, never took a risk...

Maybe that's the answer. Maybe we lucky survivors–because I

refuse to believe that being dead is better – maybe we are not what we were. Perhaps there is a before and after, as clear-cut as that –

we are not now how we have been. Perhaps I became a different

person the day they dragged me down into those mines. Could that 53

be it? Am I numb? Is that what survival is, when you lose

everything you have ever valued and everything you may ever

achieve in one blast from the bluest of skies? Maybe, after seeing so much death and destruction on this devastated planet, my brain just shut down.

For the life of me, I can't think why else I would have been so brave, so stupid. And yet that was what saved my life, and damned it at the same time.

Hope. That's what led me to be so bold. Hope – or maybe... the lack of it. Maybe it was just despair. Funny how close those two things are. Like the fine line between love and hate; hope and despair... so very near to each other. If I hadn't been so without hope at that moment, if I hadn't cared so little about whether I lived or died, been so exhausted that death seemed like nothing worse than a chance for peace and rest, then I would never have said what I did. I would never have dared to. But I think the Dalek Supreme already knew that. It tested me to make sure; but it knew. It dangled hope in front of me like a carrot, and I was so starving I ignored the stick. Perhaps it thinks t can't see what it's trying to do. But I am not that naive. That's the other thing about despair. It puts you in a pit so deep and dark and interminable that if someone offers you a glimmer of hope, that's all you can see. I still can't see an

alternative. Isn't it better to have some hope rather than none? A breathing space, a chance, a dream...

It makes me sick, the thought of these people here in the mines, these people who only days ago were living their lives their own way, – happy, sad, angry... whatever. A free life of any kind is preferable to

slavery.

I think Kalendorf would rather I had kept my mouth shut and my head down. The Daleks have noticed me; he doesn't like that.

They've offered me a chance to make the lives of these people

better... and it seems as if he still doesn't understand. Would he rather have us work ourselves to death as slaves or eat and sleep as slaves? What could I do? He must understand I had no choice.

The Daleks think they have tricked me into building them a

workforce. They think of hope as an abstract, pathetic emotion that just keeps humans usefully alive. They don't know it strengthens us.

Their mangled hearts and chrome cages can't understand the power of possibility. The power of thought, of imagination, of

determination. Hope. It's a small word, but with it we will triumph.

I know that this is the only way. I know it. And Kalendorf will have to see that eventually. He must.

'But if they feed us, and let as sleep, we'll grow strong. They 54

won't have broken our spirit. We can... we can maybe find a way to fight back.'

'Don't say my name! Don't say it! I hate it when you say it! Don't say it!'

There are tears on my face. I can feel my chest shuddering. I

should pull myself together, but it's almost as if there are two of me here. One watching from the corner of the room, dispassionate, silent, and one crumpled inside the body that I know must be mine.

In front of that me, the Dalek Supreme pauses. It doesn't care about my sobbing. God knows, they've seen enough wailing and gnashing of teeth. We don't get much news of the outside galaxy, but they keep telling us the invasion is advancing... and we have no reason to believe otherwise. Maybe that helps us, a little. We, the conquered, are not alone. There are billions suffering alongside us.

I'm tired. My hands, shaking as I cover my face, are raw and

bleeding. I used to spend hours potholing, pulling chunks of rock out

of the earth for later study. I loved that side of geology, watching the seams of rock running down, down, deeper into an

underworld that only I understood. It was like unlocking the secrets of nature, the history of the world on which we built a civilisation.

What came before us, what would still be there long after we had gone, was rock. There was always something so comforting about that. When I touched that rock, I touched immortality.

Those days seem like a lifetime ago now. They are a lifetime ago, and even though I now spend my every hour beneath ground, in the dirt, I can't imagine it ever being a joy again. I can't imagine joy at all. Those days are long gone. Now there is only exhaustion, pain and the endless blue of the veganite seams stretching out before me.

1 remember the first day they let us sleep. We had to sleep on the cold hard floor of the mine shaft, in the rags that were left of our clothes. But still, to sleep after working for so long, to sink into deep oblivion, so deep that I didn't even dream, felt like pleasure.

And eating – well, it could have been anything and we'd have

thought it was a banquet. A starving man doesn't care if there is butter on his bread. I can remember a kind of euphoria sweeping through the slaves, through me. Kalendorf watched, worrying as usual, but I was caught up in it. guess that's where the idea came from – that and a desperation not to go back to being mercilessly worked to death. If the Daleks would let us sleep and eat, then surely that was a good thing? Surely we could survive anything...

What a fool I was. As if eight hours of sleep could erase eight hours of stooping in the dim light of a mine shaft, wracked with coughing from the dust caused by our picks, and aches from

sleeping yet another cold night on a bare, stony patch of dirt. As if eight hours of sleep could erase the knowledge that there would be countless more hours of the same ahead.

The Daleks never gave us blankets, or clothing. As the months

passed, our clothes grew more and more threadbare, our hair longer and increasingly matted. I took to bunching mine in my hand and twisting it up into a tight knot with my fist. I used to wonder if the

Daleks noticed our poverty. Did anything penetrate that metal skin of theirs? Did they understand that every single thread that wore through on our clothes allowed another grain of hope to drain

away?

And the truth is, I was the architect of this continuing misery. In those moments of post-sleep euphoria, 1 had thought we could

conquer the Daleks with nothing more than a bowl of food, a few hours sleep and a will to survive. I had thought that we were

somehow more than slaves, or rather that our slavery could be

temporary. Ladies and Gentlemen, normal service will resume next week.

But as the weeks passed, and became months... I began to realise what I had done. The slaves saw me as their intermediary with the Daleks, and as a workforce leader. They mistook the new system for compassion on the Daleks' part, even though I warned them – I told them it was otherwise, right at the start. It hurt at first, to see them like that. To see them beaten. They would come to me,

whispering in the dark, begging for something to sleep on,

something to cover themselves with – something, anything to avoid further humiliation. All of them begging for a dignity I had helped take away from them, had helped them give away willingly. I could see Kalendorf looking at me from the corner of his eye at times like this, watching with his grim, expressionless face, listening silently to their urgent, tearful whispers. I wouldn't know what to say, wouldn't be able to help. When they had agreed to the shift system, to working as I had instructed, eight hours on, eight hours off, perhaps they had thought that was just the start. Humans employ progress in all their endeavours. What happens in the now is just for now – a better system will present itself and be implemented in time. Situations and systems evolve just as life does. So I know what they thought when they saw me standing up there in front of them, giving them my words of hope. They thought that their

poverty would not last. That this was the start, just the start. They thought that I could restore their humanity to them. That I had a plan. And if I'm honest with myself... I did too.

But what plan? It was just a vague promise. And as they began to 56

realise that I couldn't deliver anything more, their whispers began to change. They became about me, not to me. They went from

desperation to anger, but always muted, always just out of earshot.

Kalendorf watched this too, understood exactly what was going on.

I know he agreed with it, even though he didn't say so.

So much for all my good intentions. I should have remembered

that the way to hell is paved with them, and now there's no way back. But isn't life better now? Surely it is. It must be.

But they don't think of that. Living isn't enough for them. They want more, they want comfort, and they think it's my job to give that to them.

I am watching the first me – the wailing one, the one standing before her tin god. The Dalek Supreme has offered her a choice.

They are pleased with the system she has implemented on Vega VI.

It may mean slower production, but it is more consistent. There are fewer bodies to dispose of too, because slaves are not dying in such large numbers. They are not starving to death, because they are fed just enough to allow them to shuffle to and from the rock face, and they are not dying of exhaustion because they are getting eight hours of rest. And the Dalek Supreme wants this throughout the empire. Efficient slaves, a compliant occupied workforce. No more inefficient, ill-supported uprisings. They want that first me, that strong me that was mad enough with fear and exhaustion, they want her to organise them, to bring 'hope' to the slaves of the Dalek Empire.

And now I realise... the Daleks think they understand humans.

They think hope is an invisible club with which they can beat their workforce. They don't understand that hope is such a temporary thing. On Vega VI, the slaves' hope lasted all of six months. Six months was what it took for the monotony of days, the weight of the work, to erode what hope they had of anything better. Now they are simply automatons, brains dulled by insistent tiredness and lack of nutrition. They carry on because they don't have the time or energy to think of any other course of action. Bemuse the person they thought had a plan is really only an automaton herself. Because she collaborated, not for the sake of a larger plan, but for the sake of a few hours' rest. And this

is what the Daleks want me to bring to every other planet in the galaxy. This is what they are ordering me to implement, on pain of death. Except that now the Dalek Supreme is not even using the word 'hope' as a euphemism. He tells that first version of me, the brave one, that she could save lives, millions of them, billions of them. Standing here on the periphery, the watching me feels the anger surge in my chest. I want to shout out, I want to 57

scream, to say that I was wrong – that just to live is not enough; that humans need more than that. But the first me remains silent,

because to say such a thing would mean she would not live at all.

She... *I* want to live. And... I just want to get away... off this planet. You see, I can't stay here with these people. I can't listen to their half-whispers and diluted anger. They're alive, aren't they? I gave them the means to live. Why is it my responsibility to free them as well? To give them back their homes, their loved ones? I found a way to keep them alive – *why shouldn't I keep myself alive too? Is that so much to ask?*

I will see hope in people's faces again. I will. I must I will see them, if not happy, then relieved. And as long as they are *sensible*, as long as they obey and work, they will live. Isn't that atonement in itself? For every person I couldn't help, couldn't clothe, couldn't soothe, there are thousands that will survive.

Suddenly there is just one of me again, the snivelling, miserable wretch too naive or too stupid to accept her fate and go quietly into the night. And as I hear myself agreeing to become the mistress of their empire-wide slave force, 1 can see Kalendorf's face in my mind's eye. He's watching me, sideways, his eyes narrowed and a crease on his brow that is not worry but something else, something much worse. I feel he is my conscience, and even though I dread it sometimes, I need that face beside me. I need his council, his...

company. My hope. And so I make him complicit in my crime, my

escape. If I have to go – and there is no choice at all really, when it comes down to it – I will take him with me.

'I want Kalendorf .. I want my friend to come with me.'

'Isn't that what bravery is, in the face of the Daleks? I sometimes wish I was mad. That I couldn't think straight. That I didn't care about life any more.'

The air on this moon is full of dust. It blows from the rubble that is still heaped on what were once the streets of this small city. I can't remember what it was called before the Daleks arrived – I don't think I ever knew. It can't have been very significant, as it's only a moon of Garazone. They call the moon itself K5000. I can't help thinking that's a good, clean name. No emotion attached to a name like that. It's a designation, that's all, a statement of fact.

I'm tired again. Dalek saucers aren't equipped with facilities for humans. There are no chairs, no tables or beds. The floors are hard

–harder than those of the mines, really, because at least in the dirt you can burrow a little. But what human in this ever-expanding Dalek Empire would understand that if I told them? To them, I am lucky, and if they haven't yet completely lost hope they crowd 58

around me wherever I go, thinking that maybe a little of that luck will rub off on them. It never does. They call me the Angel of Mercy and when they do I just want to shake them. What mercy do I bring? What mercy can I possibly grant them? They imagine that I have influence over the Daleks. They still imagine, even after all this suffering, that what I say makes a difference. It doesn't. It never did. More and more I think that the Daleks already knew what they had to do to make the slaves work more efficiently. What they

needed from me was a figurehead. They needed a human leader to make it seem as if the slaves still had a measure of self-governance.

Oh, the Daleks are clever. But if I hadn't fallen for their... trick...

Well, they would've just found someone else. Wouldn't they?

I live in a permanent state of anger these days. I am angry with myself, angry with Kalendorf Angry with the Daleks, angry with the slaves, their thin, pathetic bodies covered in rags and sores.

They think that there is something beyond this. They are waiting for someone to free them, waiting for me to give the order, as if that will make the Dalek Empire crumble into dust.

It was Kalendorf's plan. For years we've been spreading word

through his telepathic powers, fomenting an uprising. It started out as one of our arguments. They became more and more frequent

after we left Vega VI. I call him Karl now. He hates it; but I persist.

I think he hates travelling with me, seeing me implement the work pattern throughout the galaxy. Sometimes, I think he hates me. But I know him well now, and I think he hates himself more, for being seen as my right-hand man. I see him flinch away every time a

Dalek approaches, as if not doing so makes him willing to be here.

For his sanity and conscience, he has to make it clear how much he hates them. And by association... me. Yes, I think my friend

Kalendorf really does hate me. Our arguments are not always

conducted telepathically. There are times, rare ones when we're off the saucer, away from their endless surveillance, that we can

communicate more freely. It's a risk, and sometimes I think we take it just to feel alive. For a few moments, we're almost free.

It was one of those times, when the Daleks had brought us to a new planet and given me a new slave force to organise... Kalendorf refused to disembark with me. He said he couldn't bear it, hearing me repeat the speech I use to introduce myself and what I'm there for. I said I needed him by my side. But he just said the thought of that made him feel sick.

Even now the memory of what he said rings in my head as if he is speaking right now.

'You don't need to do it any more, they all know why you're

here. You're their Angel of Mercy, you're their goddess of hope.

Why not scrap the routine, give them some stand-up or something.

Put some *comedy* into it, Suz.'

He spat that last line with such vitriol that my heart stuttered. It was hate I heard there, disdain and disgust and murderous intent, all aimed at me. I wanted to cry, but I didn't. I haven't cried since the day the Dalek Supreme made me choose this assignment. Instead, I turned to a Dalek. I told it to force Kalendorf from the saucer. I was hurting so badly, all I wanted to do was match his hatred. He stared at me, cold, unblinking, every step as we walked down the exit ramp. When we reached the surface, I signalled for the Dalek to return to its duties.

It obeyed.

‘Is that supposed to impress me?’

I just looked at him. For a long time. And then I told him to come up with a plan himself. If my keeping millions alive instead of letting them be exterminated wasn’t enough, then he could come up with something else we could do, because I was all out of ideas.

‘Well?’ I said to him.

He walked away from me in disgust. Behind me, back up the

ramp, in the saucer’s entrance, I saw a Dalek twitch. It wanted to know if I would order Karl to be restrained. I shook my head slowly and the Dalek pulled back into the saucer. Slowly, I followed Karl.

Every step I was testing Dalek authority. Every step, I expected to be ordered to ‘Halt!’ But they let me go, that day. They let me walk on my own, because they knew there was no escape. And I found

Karl. And I asked him again.

‘Well, do you have a big idea?’

He did. It was daring, foolish, dangerous, but it used our one advantage, our secret weapon – his telepathy. In the weeks that followed, Kalendorf seemed alive again. He was, if not happy, then more positive than I had ever seen him. It was infectious, and I got caught up in his ideas. A fool never learns. It was that insidious thing again – hope. It chained us once more to its promise of

something better, of something more than this. I could see that euphoria again, this time in Karl, as he found a purpose for himself.

I could see myself in him, ironic considering the age gap between us, an elder looking at a child. I had been where Kalendorf was.

And that’s what killed my hope in his plan, bit by bit. I’d been there, I’d felt that hope and I’d felt it die too.

I didn’t let him see my cynicism. It healed us for a while, made us friends again, rather than just barely tolerant of each other. And I wanted to believe that we could make it work. That after years of this desolate life, there was something to look forward to beyond 60

survival. But all the time, there was a voice inside me – the cynical

me, the me that died long ago – saying that it was useless. Two people against the might of the Dalek Empire... what could we hope to achieve? And even if we did spread the word, even if there were slaves out there willing to risk what little they had for the vague chance of freedom and happiness, what could we really do?

But we did it anyway, and that's what brings me here. This is the beginning of the end, I knew it as soon as I saw Kalendorf standing there with the Garazone foreman; Wernay, one of the faithful,

always with a weary smile for me.

And I think to myself, I can save only one of them...

This is what hope has brought us, this is what Kalendorf's plan...

our plan has done.

What really scares me is when I can see things from a Dalek

point of view. I try not to, but now I can sometimes even think the way they think. I can anticipate how they are going to deal with a situation, what they will say in that almost insane voice of theirs. It helps me manage the slaves, but every time I find myself thinking that way I feel become a little less human. And so I know... I know these 'insurgents' must die. I'm thinking like a Dalek, aren't I?

Karl should have anticipated this, should have known that some of those we gave hope to would not be able to wait. It can't have been a surprise. He gave them a glimpse of something else – of freedom. And now perhaps he will see how easily hope can be

betrayed.

If I do not exterminate them, all will be lost. Our plan, our lives...

everything. The Daleks will interrogate the slaves, and that will mean the death of both Kalendorf and me. And then what? There

will be a purge. The Daleks will travel to every world I have been to and wipe out everyone there. They will stop at nothing to root out the plotters, and when they have done that they will just start again.

They'll find another Angel of Mercy. Another fool. And then...

More slavery, more death, more destruction.

So, you see, I have no choice. You see that, don't you?

Kalendorf is staring at me. I think he said something, but I didn't hear what it was. The Daleks are lined up behind me, and behind that I can feel the saucer looming where it landed. It's as if there is a line between us, between myself and the Daleks on one side and Kalendorf and the slaves on the other. I wonder if we'll ever be able to stand side-by-side again. I wonder what side of the line I belong.

I don't flinch when a Dalek passes me. I used to, but now I hardly see what they are. I think my mind has them blotted out. I can't feel anything for them... not even hate any more. What does that say 61

about me?

'Kill them all.'

'They need me!'

I can still hear Kalendorf laughing. He hasn't laughed in a long time, and although it wasn't a laugh of joy, it was still a laugh.

Remembering what I said, what I thought, I feel like laughing too.

But my laughter would be hysterical, insane, like the words that I uttered just moments ago.

In front of us, a Dalek glides silently through the corridors of yet another featureless base. I don't feel fear, despite the way they removed us from our quarters, by blowing up the doors and

crashing in like solid slabs of armour. I am feeling humiliation, at my stupidity. Have I been so stupid the entire time? Was there ever a moment where I was thinking clearly? All these years, I have been spreading the word... for what? Did I ever really believe everything I told myself? That I was saving lives, that 1 was aiding a resistance to the occupation of this galaxy? It's amazing how quickly the image of yourself can crumble.

I continue to walk, and as I do I can feel my face flush hot. I told Karl that I had power over the Daleks. That they trusted me, that they needed me. Did I ever really think that, and if I did, how? How could I? Karl is right. He's always been right, about everything. I am as much a slave as the humans working in the burning pits and factories of every planet we've been to. And just because I travelled in the Dalek saucers and spoke to the Dalek Supreme, I thought I was

different. But, like Karl said, the only difference was I was a *willing* slave.

The explosion is still ringing in my ears. The Dalek still moving ahead of us. As I turn, the Dalek behind us jerks its eyestalk and focuses, looking right at me. And that burning-bright, mechanical eye seems to combine with the whine of my bruised eardrums as the sounds around me slowly fade up through the numbness. It almost feels like a moment of realisation as my hearing starts to return.

Maybe it is.

All this time, all these years that we've been secretly raising a resistance, I never truly believed it would come to something.

That's what I'm realising now. And I think Karl has always known that's what I thought, though he's never confronted me about it. He always did it in a roundabout way, asking when the time would be right, when was I going to issue the order? And I always put it off.

Why? Because I was afraid, yes, for my personal safety – after everything else I've done, I may as well admit that to myself. But also, there was a fear of failure. What if we tried it and failed? What 62

if the Daleks wiped us out immediately? What would be the point of that?

And secretly, in my heart of hearts, that's what I believe...

believed would happen. The rebellion would fail, we'd be

exterminated where we stood and all of it would have been for

nothing. I'm sure the thought has crossed Kalendorf's mind too. But the difference is, he would rather try and fail than continue living like this. That's what makes him a hero, you see. I am not a hero. I am not brave, I cannot suspend my fear of death. And to die, every particle burnt alive by means of a Dalek gun, is the worst death 1

can imagine... And I imagine it more and more now. So I can't see the eternity of death as a welcome release any more. I can only hear the screams of the dying, the electrified spasm of a body caught in that piercing beam. I feel it would be something worse than dying...

something infinitely more hellish.

As the hissing and whining in my ears ebbs and flows, my mind

feels wiped clean. I can see clearly for the first time in years; the veil of hope has lifted...

I am a collaborator.

I have willingly supported the Daleks, using the lives of millions as if that excuses me of being complicit in the deaths of... hundreds?

Thousands?

I know what I am, I have always known. A collaborator that

saves the lives of slaves is still supporting a regime of slavery. But somewhere along the line, that knowledge got crowded out. I

suppose I've just been busy, raising slave efficiency in the Dalek Empire. The thought makes sick, dead inside.

Now, over the last few short minutes, every justification for my actions has vanished. I want to stop walking. Stop. Just stop.

Beside me, Kalendorf walks silently. I look at him, and he looks back. He raises an eyebrow, perhaps seeing something in my eyes that has been absent for a long time.

He doesn't miss his stride as he reaches out a hand, touching my arm. In his tired eyes, I see the hint of a smile. His hand moves down my arm and he briefly touches my hand.

And right then, I know that he is what I need. I want to cry. But I won't. I see the difference between a Dalek lens's cold glare and the sheer humanity of one look from Karl.

That's why he's here, isn't it? That's why I will always need him here. He is my conscience, I've just been drowning him out for too long.

I feel like something has changed. I can almost hear clearly now.

'Friendships don't always... well, they don't always run

smoothly.'

And how would Alby and I have ever been happy... as slaves of the Daleks? With probably the whole galaxy enslaved?'

For a moment, I think I'm back on Vega VI. It would complete a circle that began so many years ago. l can feel my hand in the water... I'm back home.

I've often dipped my hand in a bowl of water and shut my eyes, remembering that day it all began – or rather, the day it all ended.

I've thought about Alby a lot in those intervening years, though I never dreamed he'd still be thinking about me. That brief, shared lunch with him on the speedboat is like a snapshot of happiness I've carried with me ever since. Sitting on the deck, telling him he's going too fast, clutching my samples as the waves bounced us into the air.

The bluest of blue skies, the bluest of blue waters, and the two of us together, enjoying it...

In the truncated dictionary that I've carried in my head ever since the invasion, under 'happy' there is that picture. Nothing since has ever come close – nothing ever will, now.

And I'm not on Vega VI. Which planet is it now? Oh, yes,

Yaldos. Just another planet in the victorious Dalek Empire.

The last couple of days have been strange, as if the pace of life has

slowed. I'm seeing everything in terrible clarity, the last of this, the last of that. I'm not letting myself think about the tragedy of Alby crossing a galaxy to find me, never to see me again.

I was never set to be a high-flier, back then when 'life' actually meant 'living'. I can remember the way my heart flipped over that day, when Alby mentioned his nest egg. For the future... I wanted to ask, urn there? In your future? Is there a place for me? Nervously, as if asking someone if they wanted to be with you was something terrifying... As if wanting to spend your life with another free, living person was something to keep secret, and not admit.

Turned out I was in his future, more pity for him. I was in the future of all the people who now mill around me every day. I

wonder what they are thinking. Are they contemplating rebellion?

Are they ready for the announcement I am poised to give? Will this day see the beginning of the end of the Daleks, and the beginning of a new era for humankind?

I won't live to find out, I know that.

Kalendorf wants me to reconsider, to let him make the

announcement, tip the balance... but that's impossible. It has to be me. If not me, then what were these last years of my life for? He thinks I still have a chance at regaining that happiness, of finding 64

myself back in that snapshot beside Alby, eating pickled onions.

And I always thought I was the self-deceived Alby and I – our time has passed. In fact, our time never even was. It's just one of those things. Alby will understand. We didn't even know each other, not really. And so many years have gone by. How can we be the same people we were back then, when the worst of my worries was how fast he was driving? No, I'm not back on Vega VI. The air is

clearer, the sky bluer than I remember from those months of

slavery. This Yaldos sky holds the promise of something other than grey slavery.

Something else helped make me certain that it should be up to me to make the broadcast; something so simple and yet so significant that it showed me how truly colourless our lives have become. A few months

back, as Kalendorf and I walked around the devastated ruins of some city, on some planet whose name I've forgotten, a tiny flash of green caught my eye. It came from beneath a pile of broken bricks, an old house on an old street, where bones and

masonry had been bulldozed into huge, dark mounds. Amongst this, the green stood out like a fluorescent beacon... I couldn't remember the last time i had seen anything that shade. Though Kalendorf was talking to me, I suddenly couldn't hear what he was saying.

Crouching beside the rubble, I began to clear away the pieces of debris, wanting to see more of what my eye had caught on. I

couldn't remember the last time I'd seen the colour green. Slave clothing had long since ceased to be anything but a uniform grey that blended with the poorly lit mines and factories. But this...

This was true green, sprouting from the depths of a damaged

planet. Karl turned when he realised I was no longer beside him, and got down next to me to see what I was doing. Neither of us spoke as he started to help me clear the rubble. I think that moment was too fragile for words. This felt important, beyond anything else we had done or said.

And there it was. Beneath the rubble... a green plant shoot...

reaching towards the pale sunlight through the leftover rubble of our defeat. It had a bud, and there was a flower in it, ready to open when the time was right. Soon.

That's when I felt it... When I felt I knew. The Daleks could not rule us forever. They had conquered the entire galaxy, but their time was almost at an end. And mine too.

We would succeed. We would fight back. The end of Susan

Mendes would be the end of the Daleks.

'I need solitude. One of the privileges of the Angel of Mercy and this is just the right place to give we real peace of mind.'

65

The Best Joke I Ever Told

Simon Guerrier

107. Int. Modoshawb command station.

The Black Dalek addresses a squad of trooper Daleks.

BLACK DALEK (*Midway through speech*) ... total conquest of inferior beings. We must destroy anything that is not pure Dalek.

DALEKS

(*Chorusing*) Daleks conquer and destroy!

Daleks conquer and destroy!

DALEK ORG

Excuse me, chief? Sudden hush from the other

Daleks.

BLACK DALEK You have a question?

DALEK ORG

Well, chief, you've got that go-faster fender and

the aerodynamic chassis.

The other Daleks acknowledge this.

BLACK DALEK (*Wary*) I have been modified for strategic thinking...

DALEK ORG

And you're a different colour from us.

DALEKS Operate

pyro-flames!

BLACK DALEK (*Panic now*) Wait! I command here!

DALEKS Exterminate!

BLACK DALEK No, wait! Arggggh!

The Black Dalek perishes in the flames. When the flames die down:
DALEK ORG

I command now.

The Daleks circle around him.

DALEK BORG

Having a plunger instead of a pyro-flame makes

66

you... different?

DALEK ORG Yes.

(*He realises what they mean*) No, wait!

DALEKS Exterminate!

The Daleks destroy Dalek Org, and then turn on one another. As they wreck the set, Zeet enters stage left, done up as Mavic Chen.

'MAVIC CHEN' We find this senseless violence... senseless.

Lights dim to spotlight on him.

'MAVIC CHEN' Why can the galaxy not be more peaceable, more agreeable, and more keen to invest in my subsidiary

enterprises – which I can assure you are all perfectly legal! It's so disheartening. It just makes me want to sing...

Music swells to the tune of Just Arrived on Sedna *and Chen is joined by dancing girls in floor-length skirts who –*

'No, that's a rubbish idea.

'Maybe if just one of the Daleks has a pyro-flame and they all turn on him at the end? Or is it funnier if instead of shooting fire it's some kind of squirty white foam?

'Should the Daleks join in with the song?

'Comedy doesn't come easy – at least it doesn't for me. I have never been a naturally funny man. It's never me leading the

conversation, even when I'm among friends. I don't make people laugh spontaneously because I can never think of the right line in

time. Instead I just stand there like an idiot, listening to the others, one hundred per cent of no use or, worse, blurt something they don't even understand.

'Sometimes what I should have said comes to me hours or weeks

afterwards. I jot these perfect words down in my v-assist and then try to find a place for them somewhere in the show.

'They rarely ever fit, though. Gags need a context and by the time you rework the particular circumstance – so that it's topical or relevant or at least not going to get you sued – the punchline no longer matches. The best joke in all the galactic frond and it will just seem forced and unfunny.

'So I have to sweat it out. Every beat of a script is a struggle. And it never gets any easier, not even when you've built up your

audience or won loads of awards.

'You revise and rewrite until the comedy bleeds through, and you have to be harsh with your children. The thing about this craft – it's not art, whatever my contemporaries will tell you – is that you 67

know when you're not on the money. Honestly, you die a little

when a joke gets met with silence.

'But it's not just the silences that eat you up, because you learn to weather those. Audiences are unforgiving and I don't mean they get a bit tetchy. I've seen vein-popping fury, mortal offence caused by your failure to entertain. They send in petitions, or set up v-sites detailing every comma of your inadequacy. I think some people

enjoy watching telly solely to slag it all off.

'And they can even get threatening and violent. Comedy is a

dangerous game, and I –

'Oh, what is it now?'

'Sorry to interrupt' said the curly blond mop poking round his dressing room door. 'Zeet Frenzy?'

'I am he,' said Zeet, returning his attention to the cumbersome task of removing his slap. The recording light winked at him,

knowing this wasn't for the book.

In the mirror in front of him, the blond mop ducked back out of sight and then reappeared atop a body in an elegant Kolpashan

patchwork. Zeet had worn a coat like that himself as an

antegraduate. He assumed the fellow had wandered in from the set of one of the period realities on Floor 94. Beside him was a tall, skinny woman in an assemblage of polka-dots, much too old to

appear on television. She might even have been in her twenties.

'This is Mel,' said the sartorial man. 'And I am known as the

Doctor.'

'Delighted, of course,' said Zeet, twirling a hand back at them, his eyes closed while the mech-maid teased off his lashes.

'They still use make-up in the year 4,001?' asked the woman. She must be keeping in historical character, he thought. Probably

straight out of soap school.

'It's tradition,' Zeet heard the man explain, quite making himself at home. Zeet opened his naked eyes to see the visitor sprawled across the Drahvidian two-seater he'd bought for the sole use of his cat. 'And I expect the ritual of adorning and unadorning oneself before and post each show allows the artiste a moment's inner calm in which to collect the performance and pass between personas. Is that not correct, Mr Frenzy?'

'Indeed, indeed,' agreed Zeet. He liked the man's grandeur and respectfulness, and rose from the mech-maid to greet the visitors properly. They shook hands once Zeet had pulled on sterilised

gloves.

'I assume you're here for my endorsement?' he said. 'Will a self-signatory satisfy you both?'

'Oh,' said the Doctor, 'we're not here for autographs, thank you.'

'Forgive me,' said Zeet patting his fingertips together. 'You want to

discuss the programme. I'm always keen to hear what people

make of it?'

'That's why you've got all the security machines, is it?' smiled the Doctor.

'Celebrity is a dangerous business. Not everyone knows how to

put forward constructive criticism in a way that's appropriately...'

He fluttered his fingers as if they might pluck the right word from the air.

'Constructive?' suggested the Doctor.

'Yes. But let's not worry about other people. Tell me what you think.'

'Mel?' the Doctor prompted, rubbing absently on the

communicator token at his lapel, cut in the shape of some animal.

Perhaps, thought Zeet, their conversation was being picked up in narrowcast format. He'd let his agent agree the terms once he'd moved these two opportunists on.

The woman hesitated, and for a moment Zeet thought her terribly immature, as if she'd somehow reached whatever age with all her innocence intact. She should watch more television.

'Well,' said Mel. 'Your show...'

'Go on, please. I'm very thick-skinned.'

'Well,' she repeated. 'It stinks.'

'I vainly assumed it was part of some skit. You remember how they got Tork Voovy singing the Martian anthem to a goat? It had to be something like that, or how else could they have got into a secure level? And I was flattered to have made the grade, to be worth their wanting to stitch up.

'Bretzel had been on something similar a couple of seasons back and said the trick is to meet whatever they hurl at you with smiles and easy grace. Give them a close-up looking bewildered or mardy and that's all they'll run in the show. And when you win an award or get arrested or die? That's the only clip the networks will pay for.

Bretzel might never remember her lines but she knows all the tricks of this business.

‘So I obligingly followed the Doctor and Mel to their container unit. I’ve no idea how the gag is done but having stood outside a wooden crate we’re suddenly inside this brilliant white temple. It’s like a set from *Clinical Excellence*. The Doctor fusses over a tabletop of controls, working the prop like a pro. Whatever I’m into it’s got one hell of a budget.

‘The woman continues to rib me about the show while we wait on 69

whatever’s the next set-up. She’s pretty mean-spirited about the quality of the work, but I know she just wants a reaction. I stay strictly on-message and trot out the usual thing about our legal obligations to maximising audience share and how I don’t get to make corporate law. I’m sure there are things we can do better, I say, but at the same time we can’t be seen to offend the core

demographic. People write in or, worse, sell their options.

‘“I just don’t think editorial control should be handed to the investors,” said the Doctor.

‘I sally back that people should get a say in what they pay for, that anything else is a tyranny. And the Doctor seems almost

impressed.

‘Mel sighs. “It just turns the creative process into a gamble,” she says. “It’s less about talent than luck.”

‘“Which is probably why,” I say, “those without the talent prefer it that way; it levels the odds in their favour.”

‘Yeah, we’re getting on fine. All the same, I’m making mental

note to get my agent on this. I’m sure he’ll have a stipulation that the work gets referred to respectfully. This abrasive stuff never plays well. Prime-timers don’t want to download a debate on

economics. Telly shouldn’t give you a headache.

‘Don’t get me wrong. Mel’s enthusiasm is catching; she just lacks the discretion of experience. If she wants to catch me off-guard she needs to vary the routine. But she returns time and again to the same tired

line – one we've all heard before.

"'The Daleks aren't a joke," she says.

"'Really?" I say. "And who are you to censor what's funny?"'

59. Dalek barber shop.

Dalek Borg is wearing all apron as he sits Zeet down in the barber's chain

DALEK BORG

(*Camp*) Something for the weekend, sir?

ZEET

Just a haircut, please. (*Beat*) Short back and sides.

DALEK BORG

Ooh, inne' bold?

DALEK ORG

He's a monster, Borg, a monster. Let me have a

go with him next!

The ground was like wax underfoot. Mel's heels crushed into the strange texture and she felt awful just for being there. This was not a place to sightsee. The TARDIS stood on a formless incline the colour of dried blood, reaching unblemished to the horizon. The snake of their footprints was the only impression in this terrifying, 70

desolate landscape.

'Inner-city Carvoni,' said the Doctor to the sky. 'Daytime

population of just over 13 million. Main exports: hand-woven

textiles and add-ons for virtual assistants.' He gazed levelly at Zeet.

'Until the Daleks came to Guria, this used to be a hospital.'

Zeet looked quickly away, staring down at his patent-ersatz

Crooz-shooz. Mel expected his shoes cost more than most people earned in a year, and the wax had already stained them.

‘Are you even listening?’ she snapped, feeling her nostrils flare.

‘There were 13 million people living here until two weeks ago.

What’s that as a proportion of your downloaders?’

Zeet shrugged at her. ‘And your point is?’

‘Of course I knew what the Daleks had done. I follow the news on all the major networks – have to, just to get the material.

‘Guria didn’t count as an outlying world. The Daleks had passed silently through the Earth Empire’s defences and flattened a

planetary suburb. Billions of bright and able human pioneers and all of them gone in an instant

‘It had taken a while for the news to filter out because the Daleks damaged the Gurian satellite relays. Then again, most people were glued to the live final of *Who Wants to be the Next President of Earth?*

‘But *we* were paying attention. We even did a sketch about it.’

43. Office of Roj Rism, Celebrity Decorator.

A Dalek couple look over the many-dimensional plans ‘Roj’ (Zeet) *has drawn up for their love-nest.*

The ‘before’ image shows cities and skyhomes. The ‘after’ shows nothing at all. Read-screens are labelled ‘Fare-lift for planet Guria’.

‘ROJ’

So I thought we’d take what there is currently and knock

it through, creating one spacious reception...

DALEK ORG

It will make an ideal playroom when Junior

hatches out.

‘And you find this hilarious, do you?’ asked the Doctor. Zeet

looked all around carefully, to show he was giving it some thought.

He’d seen projection methods and sim-scenarios before, but this was

something else. It was just beginning to occur to him that maybe they weren't playing for laughs.

'We've got to include the big stuff,' he said. 'It's about breaking down the taboos. And anyway, a lot of our audience get their news 71

solely from watching our show.'

'But that's awful,' said Mel.

'You can't force people to take an interest in current affairs,' said the Doctor patiently.

'That's right,' said Zeet. 'At least we help keep them politically aware. In an accessible, light entertainment way.'

'But so many people died here,' said Mel.

'And we're not disrespectful. We don't do jokes about killings or torture, and the network's not allowed to show blood. What we do is satirical commentary, giving what happens some spin. It helps people accommodate what's going on across the galaxy and its

environs into their everyday lives.'

'Those who've still got everyday lives,' said the Doctor. 'The people of Carvoni might not have been so amused.'

'Look,' said Zeet, 'you try doing what we do. We're

contractually required to supply six big woofs per page – that's more than one every minute. Between each of those you need one or two sub-woofs to structure and pace out the programme. Then there's the suspended enigmas to hold your audience through the condonements, and something leftfield for the credits to run over.

We do them under-liminally so you need something pretty ambient.

There's a huge amount of work for just 20 minutes of programme, and you've a week to get it all together.'

'I am sure,' said the Doctor, 'that there are a large number of very talented people involved, working conscientiously and hard.'

'Too right.'

'But every one of you is selling yourselves out. The show you

produce is an absolute travesty.'

'The Doctor's right,' said Mel. 'It's not even as if it's funny.'

'Yeah, well,' said Zeet. 'A regular audience of 9.4 billion

aggregated downloaders seems to disagree. It's not my fault you've got no sense of humour.'

'Now hold on a minute!' began Mel, but Zeet wouldn't let her in edgeways.

'I'll listen to criticism of anything we do – I even went over to Shouting Mike at the Promo-Chortle Awards and shook him

robustly by the flipper. You think Rel Ebden is big enough to do that?'

'I was only saying –'

'And as for you,' Zeet turned on the Doctor. 'We're shareholders in our own show. So who can I be selling out to?'

The Doctor had listened to all this with an infuriating smile, untouched by any part of the argument. When Zeet had finished, he

merely pointed a finger to the dark shapes moving impossibly fast towards them over the featureless red terrain.

'Daleks!' said Mel.

The Doctor stroked at the cat brooch pinned to his lapel. 'That's just what I was going to say.'

Melanie Bush had never quite got over being bullied while at

school. She knew people who'd had it a lot worse, and by her third year she felt big enough to take some of the bullies on.

They bullied her about a few things – what she looked like, where she lived, who her parents were. It never bothered her in the

slightest. What burnt her up with rage and frustration was what Andy Ledger said the day after her eleventh birthday:

'Melanie doesn't have a sense of humour.'

It shouldn't have got to her but it did. And because she reacted, Andy was still bringing it up the very last rime that she saw him, on the day they collected their A-level results. She had come a long way since and seen many terrifying things, yet she still sometimes had nightmares about Andy Ledger.

The injustice of it riled her. She knew she was a gawky, brash kid who sometimes didn't think, and that her hair was wild and

untameable. It didn't worry her that her house was bigger than most of her friends'. But Melanie *loved* to laugh. Her only memories of a beloved grandfather were clutching her sides and begging him to stop as he worked through a litany of bad jokes.

She just didn't like the kind of jokes the boys told – sick ones about car accidents or people from other countries. Jokes that weren't funny, just wrong. The other kids laughed out of shock, out of how much trouble they thought they'd be in if any teachers

overheard them.

Mel had known, even age 10, that they'd got that wrong as well; grown-ups could be just as vicious for no reason as any of their bullying pupils.

The meanness of their jokes worked against the skill in the

telling, which was where the real artistry lay. She loved how a punchline could come out of nowhere and turn the tables on

everything set up so far. She loved the brilliant instant that something so certain became so ridiculous. Which was why she

laughed at the Daleks.

'You are our prisoners,' they screeched as they hovered in front of the humans. The Doctor and Mel raised their hands.

Zeet, however, made a dash for it, racing towards where the

TARDIS stood, as much as half a mile away.

The Daleks' eyestalks tracked his progress.

'Exterminate him,' one of the Daleks ordered. Another Dalek's

eyestalk swivelled round to face its commander.

‘No,’ it said. ‘That is Zeet Frenzy!’

‘I get recognised all the time, of course. You’re bound to meet people at parties who at some point you’ve done on the show.

Vezris, who was with us up to series three, never understood that or why he could be so unpopular.

‘So it shouldn’t have surprised me that these Daleks knew the

lines. But it was such a weird thing to hear, in the middle of nowhere on a godforsaken world, that I stopped running and came right back to them. I’m not proud and I know I’m a coward, but it seemed all the more gutless to be running away from my fans.

‘“Hi,” I said, all showbiz glory. “I’m Zeet Frenzy.”

‘“The Daleks know who you are,” said the Dalek who seemed to

be most in charge. I still harboured some weird hope that this was all being recorded and that the whole System would hear this

endorsement. It’d shut up my agent, at least.

‘“We’re invited to join them for some light incarceration,” said the Doctor. I wish I’d said something about how we’d love to only didn’t we have a prior engagement. But I only thought of that one just now.

‘They made us march for what seemed like hours – it’s difficult to say when there aren’t any landmarks. Remember that I’m still wearing most of my Albert Menane costume, which comes with

these ridiculous shoes. But eventually there’s the tiny grey dome of a Dalek station, spewing acrid smoke into the sky. It’s an agonising last slog to get up to it; the place turns out to be vast.

‘I’ll say this for our designer guy, Raik: the low ceilings and sloping doorways are just like they are on our stage sets. I’m not frightened as we’re escorted inside. Yeah, the industrial sound effects creep you out a bit, but it’s just like being at work. I try a few feeds from the show on our escort, to try and build up some rapport.

‘“I like what you’ve done with your slats,” I say, or, “You keep this place perfectly vacuumed.” I’m sure they know what the

responses are and that they're just playing head games with their silence.

'We arrive at an angular cell and they shove me and the Doctor inside. It's probably more psychology when they take Mel away on her own.'

The regular double-heartbeat of some dreadful machine

reverberated right through her body. Mel walked as tall and

confidently as she felt able, the Daleks leading her into a low-lit chamber full of controls. She tried to make sense of the dials and read-outs, in the vain hope that a computer programmer from the 1980s might be able to spot a weakness. When she got back to the TARDIS – she told herself it was a matter of when and not if –

she'd make sure she brushed up on the programming code of the

future.

'You will be interrogated!' barked the black-clad Dalek who

seemed to be in charge of the control room.

'Oh, come on!' she said. 'I'm not going to tell you anything!'

'We do not require you to speak!'

'But I don't understand,' said Mel. 'If I don't speak, how can I –'

She felt a sudden pain in the small of her back. A Dalek sucker arm had pressed against her flesh. Her skin bristled all over with faint electricity, a not unpleasant sensation.

'I won't...' she said. 'I won't...' But she had already left the control room. She was walking backwards across the waxy red

plain that had once been the heart of a city, her life rewinding to where the TARDIS had landed.

'They took Mel so we'd be good boys and not try to escape,' said the Doctor as they escaped from their cell. Zeet wasn't exactly sure what the man had done, but it seemed to involve safety pins.

'But won't they hurt her if they know what we're doing?'

‘It’s the sort of thing they do,’ said the Doctor. ‘Which is why we need to get a move on.’

They ran through a network of corridors and to Zeet it seemed that the Doctor knew where he was heading. Perhaps he just gave that impression so Zeet wouldn’t ask stupid questions.

‘What are we looking for?’ he asked.

‘We need to find out what they’re up to. They’ve killed everyone on the planet already so what are they sticking around for?’

‘It is quite a nice shade of red,’ said Zeet, reaching into his pocket.

‘What are you doing?’ snapped the Doctor. ‘We don’t have very

much time.’

‘I just wanted to save that in my v-assist,’ said Zeet. ‘I think it’d work on the show.’

‘Yes, your show,’ said the Doctor, dragging him by the arm. ‘Tell me, Mr Frenzy, the two “Daleks” you work with...’

‘Borg and Org. Brilliant with timing, those two. Really

professional.’

‘Yes, of course. And there are actors inside them?’

Zeet grinned. ‘We don’t like to say so. Spoils it for the children, doesn’t it?’

‘And you get a lot of children watching your cutting-edge satire?’

‘Actually we do! They down it when nobody’s looking. Show off

to their peers about it in developmental fora.’

A Dalek glided in swift and eerie silence across an intersecting corridor ahead of them. They froze, nowhere to hide anywhere

nearby. The Dalek did not return.

‘I see,’ exhaled the Doctor quietly. ‘And what are the actors like?’

‘I, uh, don’t really have a lot to do with them these days,’ Zeet admitted.

‘Really?’ The Doctor led him on and they turned at the intersection, back the way the Dalek had come.

‘Oh, we’re all perfectly professional on set. But outside the studio...

Well, they’re apparently writing a joint autobiography.’

‘Are they now?’

‘Yeah, and they’re claiming that they’re the ones who write all the gags. That the show’s improvised in the studio.’

‘So when was the last time you saw them out of their costumes?’

‘Oh, not for months,’ said Zeet. ‘They don’t come to the after-show drinkies any more. Though neither do I for that matter. Is this it, then?’ They had emerged into some kind of control room. The Doctor slapped the flat of his hand against the geometric controls, squares and circles that would perfectly fit a Dalek sucker. Zeet stooped to watch alien runes scroll across the screen. The Doctor moved his palm around one of the circles, changing the display as he did so.

‘Telling you what’s soup of the day?’ Zeet asked. The v-assist picked that one up.

The Doctor’s expression was grim.

‘They’re gathering an army here, to launch a new attack,’ Zeet said much more seriously. The Doctor blinked.

‘Yes,’ he said, a little amazed. ‘You can read this?’

‘Nah,’ said Zeet. ‘It’s the sort of thing they do. If they’re not invading then they’re planning their next invasion. Stands to reason.

Does it say where it’s likely to be?’

The Doctor nodded. ‘Hammerhead formation through the Ipsis

moons and then on to the settlements on Georgia.’

‘Right,’ nodded Zeet. ‘There are two point eight billion registered downloaders in the Ipsis moons.’

‘Are there really?’

‘Yeah.’

‘Well, then,’ said the Doctor. ‘We should probably do something to stop this.’

‘Righto. And how do we do that?’

The Doctor cracked his knuckles like a session pianist and set to the
76

machine, dancing back and forth as he pressed and caressed the controls.

‘First,’ the Doctor explained as he worked, ‘we warm things up a bit. That red lever – push it all the way down.’ Zeet did as he was told, the lever falling with uncanny grace.

‘What’s that done?’

‘You’ve shut down a post-atomic reactor. It’ll go critical in the next half an hour. Should make quite a bang.’

‘By which time we’ll be back at your ship, yeah?’

‘I’m hoping so. We’ve just got to collect Mel on the way...’

‘Doctor,’ said Zeet levelly, ‘they’ve probably killed her.’

‘Probably,’ agreed the Doctor, not looking round from his mischief.

‘But that’s not the same thing as definitely, is it? Now then...’

His words were lost under a sudden and deafening alarm. Zeet

clamped his hands over his ears, the noise filling his head and threatening a nosebleed. In front of him, the Doctor was admonishing himself as he re-keyed a sequence. The hullabaloo was gone as

suddenly as it had started, leaving only an enraged scream of tinnitus.

‘... and forgot that it might make them do that,’ the Doctor was saying.

‘What?’ yelled Zeet over the noise of his own ears.

‘They think the solar system is attacking,’ grinned the Doctor. ‘And

just to make things more tricky, I've let them know we escaped.'

'But they'll be after us!'

'Probably.'

'They'll have orders to kill us!'

'Also probably. But I thought I'd do something clever to outwit them.'

'Like what?'

The Doctor stroked his chin. 'I'm sure it will come to me.'

'You've got to be kidding.'

He flashed a smile. 'Definitely. Come on!'

They raced across to the far side of the room. As they passed, Zeet glanced down the corridor they'd come in by. Some distance away, a legion of Daleks sped towards them.

'Exterminate!' they cried. Zeet ran on, colliding slap into the Doctor's back. A part of Zeet's brain told him he had about thirty seconds left to live. The rest tried to focus on the Dalek-sized booth inset into the wall.

'Escape pod,' said the Doctor, hands a blur at the control board to one side. 'Enough thrust on this thing to break orbit.'

'They won't really think you've run away, will they?'

'They might. Very logical, the Daleks. And anyway, if I can get a 77

Kuiper Belt monitoring station to notice this capsule, they'll send in the cavalry to investigate. Probably.'

'Right,' said Zeet. He watched the Doctor finish the sequence and the capsule door began to close. Behind them the room filled with Daleks.

'Exterminate!' they cried.

'No, wait!' shouted the Doctor.

But Zeet had already leapt into the escape pod.

'I don't know why I did it, just saw one chance to live and took it.

‘The pod rockets upward and I’m flattened against the floor, almost bumped off by the G-force. Daleks aren’t really into the little luxuries like cushioning and seat belts. I lie there, my face trying to hide behind my ears and all I can see is the Doctor, staring at me through the porthole in the half-second before I took off. He’s not angry, like he’s got every right to be. He’s just smiling and a bit disappointed.

‘The turbulence eventually works itself out and the pod is a lot less rackety. I might have whited out and come to again, it’s difficult to tell. Getting to my knees, I can peer out the porthole at Guria, hanging just out of reach. I stare at the planet’s surface, trying to get my bearings, wondering how hard I cracked my head. I learnt the

continents of Guria in Krau Mezrl’ s class at school, yet there’s nothing...

‘And then I see what’s happened. The continents have all warped out of shape. I realise the scale of what the Daleks dropped on the people here. I never felt for them until that moment. And it wasn’t really them I was feeling for. Krau Mezrl taught me my spelling and it’s like the Daleks did this to her.

‘I miss the explosion on the planet’s surface because I’m weeping and only notice when the pod gets buffeted. It throws me around something rotten and I’m praying to anyone to make it stop. When it does, I’m laughing and laughing, using up whatever air’s in the pod.

And then there’s nothing.

‘I’m alone in the terrible silence, my ears still ringing from before.

Alone and feeling wretched about what I just did, and then it starts getting hard to breathe. The Daleks don’t need oxygen so I’ve only got what was in the pod to begin with. This tiny cramped place is going to be my coffin, and I’m livid because there’s nothing I can do.

Trapped in a thick metal box and furious at all of creation, as the oxygen runs out I can understand what it’s like being a Dalek.

‘And then a voice crackles from the receiver: “Attention capsule.

This is the solar system ship *Cavalry*.”’

‘We got your message,’ said Captain J. V. Acondo as she welcomed 78

her celebrity aboard. ‘I assume you’re not at liberty to divulge details

of your mission, sir. But we're all ravenous for anything you can tell us.'

Zeet Frenzy stared back at her blankly and Acondo realised the man was feigning oxygen starvation just to avoid all the fuss. 'We'll get you to our med-bay,' Acondo continued, already thinking how she'd relate this to her family. 'Make sure you didn't soak up too many rays. Though I think your pod took the brunt of the post-atomic radiation.' Frenzy stopped to look up at her, his eyes deep wells of horror. Acondo hated to think what the man had seen in his time as an agent of whichever service he worked for.

'There was an explosion,' he said to her in a broken voice, a ghost of his telly persona.

'Yeah,' Acondo beamed. 'Nothing left of the pepperpots. You did it, Mr Frenzy!'

He looked all around him quickly. 'I didn't –' he began.

'No need to deny it, sir. I know better than to ask what this has all been about, but hearty congratulations.'

'And so I am a hero. They think I solved it single-handedly, found and destroyed a marauding advance guard of Daleks, and with

nothing but my wits. I sleep through the journey home and arrive to discover Acondo has already attributed to me some modest remarks that make me sound like Space Security's finest. No one's denying that I work for them and that seems to prove that I'm all the media suspect I am. The more I insist that I'm nothing of the sort, the more the news anchors wink and nod wisely.

'It's all so crazy that it's a relief to get back to work and the promise of much greater ratings. I am on another level now and even Bretzel deigns to come over calling, "Darling!" and, "Super!" and,

"Really, I mean, *wow*!" It only makes me think of all the times she's said I was merely filler.

'I immerse myself in the cosy familiarity of pre-production and we head down into the studio like I was never away. I feel more at home on the set than I ever do at home, and now there are pretty things from newscasts seducing me for a soundbite. They're waved away as if they're all too beneath me and not because I can't think of anything brilliant to say.

‘Raik has put together a 4-D pastiche of the commentary box from *Very Lire Football with Weapons*. I’m made up as Oola Veep and take a moment to explore the set and compose the required persona.

Oola’s pretty quick to get into – a shrill falsetto and never stop playing with your earpiece. They’re giving me a gentle ride for my first day back and yet I’m filled with unease. My heart hammers in 79

my chest, inherited from a shrewy ancestor for whom mad panic

meant continued survival. I feel in terrible danger.

‘Two eyestalks watch my every move from away at the far end of the studio. When they know I’ve seen them they glide silently

forward.

‘“Hello Zeet,” says Org.

‘“Hello Zeet,” says Borg.

‘“Ak,” I reply, almost choking myself “Ak,” I try again, conscious of the guns and plungers and unblinking eyestalks all pointed directly my way. I think of the Doctor’s words, still preserved on my v-assist:

“And there are actors inside them?”

‘Borg and Org have always been Daleks. I barely recall the guys who came in to operate them as we rehearsed for our very first show.

A couple of smart, skinny, lads, eager to do anything to please. Borg and Org hold me in their sights now and all I can wonder is how they disposed of both the bodies.

‘In that moment of clarity, the sentence I’ve been struggling with comes tumbling out.

‘“Actually,” I say in a shrill falsetto, “my name is Oola Veep.”

‘The eyestalks turn to one another and they speak without saying a word. We used to find that hilarious, how they always seemed to know what the other was thinking, sharing secrets like twins or best friends.

‘They turn back to me, effortlessly menacing. There’s nowhere I can run to and the cameras aren’t even on.

“‘Oola Veep?” shrieks Org. There’s a terrible chasm of silence.

“Never heard of you!”

‘Borg swivels an eyestalk. “You are such a liar!”

‘We carry on as scripted and the technicians think the whole

show’s a hoot. There’s back-slapping and air-kisses and I promise –

of course! – to make their parties. It’s amazing how everyone’s different as soon as they sniff some success.

‘I escape to my room, shutting them out so I can regroup my

costume.

“‘Hello again,” says the Doctor, again sprawled in the cat’s chair.

“Sorry to drop in like this. But we should probably have a chat.”’

‘Mel is fine,’ he said. ‘She will need some time to recuperate but in the long run she’ll be absolutely fine. Tough old thing, Mel.’

‘Thank the relevant deity,’ said Zeet as he fixed himself

something irresponsible. ‘When I saw your explosion –’

‘Your explosion,’ the Doctor corrected. ‘You’re the one who

pressed down that lever.’

‘You told me to!’

‘That’s never been a valid excuse. It was entirely your decision.’

Zeet took a long swig of his drink. ‘Hang on,’ he said. ‘Blowing the Dalek base up was the right thing to do!’

The Doctor scratched at the back of his head. ‘Yes, I suppose it was really. Well, that’s all right then.’

‘So,’ said Zeet.

‘So,’ said the Doctor. They spent some time looking at each

other's shoes.

'So you're going to kill me,' said Zeet.

The Doctor looked round to see if someone else stood behind

him, though the two-seater was up against the wall. 'Me?' he said.

'Am I really?'

'Why else would you come back to see me?'

'To tell you about Mel! I thought it would put your mind at rest. I could see you're a nervous sort of fellow. You enjoy being the hero of the hour and all the medals and speeches and whatnot. You're welcome to them. I hate all that.' He got to his feet, dusted himself down and edged past Zeet to the door.

'You're going?'

'Yes. I'm just glad you got home safely. It was a bit reckless of me taking you to Guria in the first place. I sort of suspected we'd run into old friends. I wanted to apologise: I'm sorry.'

Zeet heard himself say, 'Oh, don't mention it.' And then he nobly held out his hand.

'Well,' said the Doctor. 'I'll just slip away then.'

'But,' said Zeet.

'Mmm?' said the Doctor, half in and half out of the door.

'But the Daleks!'

The Doctor sighed. 'And your point is? They are coming, yes.

But you've always known that, haven't you? You've followed their progress for years and years and made plenty of very fine jokes about it. Try not to worry. Enjoy what you've got left.'

'But that's –' said Zeet. He couldn't find the words to say quite what it was.

The Doctor shrugged. 'Like I said. I'm sorry.' And he was gone.

'Here's a joke for you there there's going to be a war. Running away

from it, pretending it won't happen, is just handing the Daleks more advantage. They are mobilising while we sit glued to the telly.

They make fools of us by making fools of themselves.

'There's only one thing I can do and that's tell people the

unwelcome truth. This show will change things, I promise you.

That's what I'd forgotten by getting caught up in the in-fights and the corporate rubbish. You write and perform to affect people, to 81

make them sit up and take notice. It's going to be unscripted, to take Borg and Org by surprise. Put the joke on the Daleks for once.

'And I know how they'll react. There's only one course open to them once I've broken ranks, once I openly provoke them. It's

funny, but I'm okay with that– really, I've never been more excited in the lead-up to a show.

'Because I remember one of Bretzel's great maxims and I know

that just this once, our show is going to matter. People will tune in especially.

'A death is always good for the ratings.'

Recording found in the wreckage of the

Theta 16 television studios, 4 September 4001

82

Natalie's Diary Part Three

Joseph Lidster

Holly looked down at her phone and frowned at the blank display.

'Just a glitch in the network,' she muttered to herself. And, just like the previous night's power cut, she was definitely sure and absolutely certain that it was nothing to worry about. So why, she wondered, was she shivering?

She stood up, walked over to the television wall and requested the news channel.

The smiling face of Sarah Cerasini flickered into life and Holly sat back down, relaxed. With television she'd never be alone.

'Stay calm,' Sarah said, her eyes sparkling. 'TelCom has

confirmed that there's been a minor technical fault with the

telephone network. In a statement just released, a company

spokeswoman announced that normal service should be resumed

shortly. The Chief Minister has also asked us to reassure the public that there is absolutely no suggestion that the unexplained fault is in any way the result of an alien attack.' The television screen

flickered slightly.

'We'll be going live to the TelCom spokeswoman in a few

moments,' Sarah continued. 'That's still to come but first our Fuel and Energy correspondent, David Dyson, is in our Subsidiary

Studio. So, Dave, what can you tell us about last night's nationwide power failure and should we be concerned?'

Holly switched the screen off and returned to her desk. It didn't really matter what was causing the phone faults and technical

glitches as she still had an essay to complete.

'No', she muttered, 'I've still got an essay to start.'

Looking back at the computer screen she realised she was also

keen to find out how Natalie had escaped the Robomen. Had Ace

and Hex's time-travelling friend returned from the dead and rescued them? Had Ace shot them down like that pop star? Perhaps the

Robomen had just wandered off...

Intrigued, Holly opened the next attachment.

83

EXTRACT BEGINS

– and I still couldn't believe we'd got away from the Robomen in the

tunnel.

As we lay down in the corn, I tried not to think about Shona. Of course, I'd been trying not to think about Shona ever since we'd left the city. Needing a distraction, I looked up at the sky and tried to count the stars. Then I realised there weren't any. Smoke from the burning people in the burning city had blotted them all out.

Something else for me not to think about then. My idea for us to rest in the field, our bodies hidden by the tall corn, had gone down well with the others but even though we were exhausted, we

couldn't sleep. I turned over onto my side and listened to the others talk. Hex was trying to comfort Ted about the death of his family.

He was saying how his mum had died when he was just a kid so he knew what Ted was going through. Ted was just quiet. To be

honest, it was like he wasn't there. In the head, I mean. And, as I lay still, trying to blot out memories of me, him and Shona messing about at work, I wished I wasn't there. I think I was actually jealous of him.

The next day, we started on our journey again. As we traipsed

through the corn, Hex put his arm around my shoulder and asked how I was doing. I could tell that what he really wanted was for me to ask how he was. So I did. And he told me that he was worried about Ace. I looked at him and realised that, from the moment she'd given herself up to the Robomen, he'd somehow seemed younger.

Less confident. I did what had to be done and told him there was nothing to worry about. The Robomen had recognised her as the

Doctor's friend which meant that, for some reason, she'd be kept alive. Everything would be fine. Then, suddenly, I stopped walking and shrugged him off. He was the Doctor's friend, so that probably meant he'd be okay as well. And, anyway, if he was this time-travelling crusader bloke then he should be comforting me. It was my world that was gone. It was my friend that was dead. As I

started to cry, he pulled me into a hug and whispered that it was okay for me to be scared. It meant I was still alive. After a few hours of walking though fields and talking about the different places Hex had been to (which I won't go into here because you'll think I'm mental), we found ourselves outside an old farmhouse. It

looked like something from a film, all white walls and roses. Also, it didn't look as though it had been damaged so we wondered

whether there'd be food inside. Since they came, I'd lived on out-of-date chocolate bars, a tin of beans we'd found by the side of a road and some purple berry things. As we looked up at the

farmhouse, I thought about the last proper meal I'd had. Pepperoni pizza and cheesy garlic bread in front of the telly. I was trying to remember the taste in my mouth when, suddenly, we heard a

scream. I'd like to say that we all instinctively ran towards the farmhouse to rescue whoever it was but, to be honest, we all just fell to the ground and tried to hide. Then, a voice called out to us. It was the first human voice we'd heard in ages and I remember that it echoed.

'Hello?' It was a woman. 'I can see you.'

We stayed still.

'You do realise you're not in the field any more?' She was

laughing. 'You're hiding in plain sight!'

I opened my eyes and looked over at Hex. The three of us were

crouched down in a large, empty courtyard. We couldn't be more obvious. I turned back to the farmhouse and watched as a woman appeared in a doorway. She looked fine. Really fine. Middle-aged and sort of homely. I stood up, looking around, as she approached us. She said her name was Theresa and asked if we were from

Rainbow City. Then she said that that wasn't important and asked if we'd like to come in for some food. Without thinking, Ted and me just started to follow her when, suddenly, Hex grabbed my arm and held me back. He asked Theresa what was going on. How come she was here? How come she was alive? She just shrugged and said that she reckoned it was because she was in the middle of nowhere. The invaders just hadn't reached her yet. We looked around and

couldn't see any fire damage so decided to follow her into the house. Then Hex, who was now starting to bug me a bit, asked why she'd screamed. She laughed and said the three of us should look at

ourselves in a mirror. Then, thankfully, Hex stopped asking

questions and we followed Theresa into the farmhouse.

Well, I say 'thankfully'... if he'd asked more questions we might have realised it was so obviously a trap. Seconds later we were being held at gunpoint in Theresa's pantry! Definitely all Hex's fault (unless Hex is reading this in which case I'm joking. Now stop reading my diary!).

Yeah, basically as soon as we went into the house, Theresa pulled a pistol out of her apron and told us not to move. They'd made a deal with Theresa. They'd taken her family and told her that her kids would be allowed to live as long as she captured anyone who escaped from the city. Oldest trick in the book but, as I hadn't read many books, I couldn't be blamed for falling for it. Hex, I could see though, was blaming himself. Ted, surprise surprise, wasn't really taking it in. No change there then. Tam would have seen through it 85

straight away.

As she led us through the house, Theresa explained that once

every week she'd get a visit from them but until the next visit she had to keep us prisoner. She said she was sorry but I still couldn't quite believe it. I mean, she looked like my nan! She gestured for us to go down some stairs at the back of her kitchen. Hungry, tired and stunned, we just did as we were told. She made Hex open the door and we stepped into a cellar. The room was dark but our eyes soon adjusted to the light and that's when we realised we weren't alone.

Theresa had got good at this. In the cellar were about ten to 15 other people. There were a couple of pretty nurses (which should have at least got some kind of response from Ted!). Someone I recognised vaguely from the telly. An elderly couple. And worst of all, a teacher with five school kids. A bunch of people all being held prisoner by a sweet old lady. All waiting, in the dark, to be taken away and either exterminated or turned into Robomen. Either way, they were waiting to die. Theresa shut the door behind us and we joined the others. And that was it. Our escape was over. Our lives were over.

At least that would have been the case, had it not been for Hex.

As Ted silently joined the others in the darkness, Hex took me to one side. He said he'd been in worse situations than this and that he wasn't going to give up. I was just quiet, looking between him and the others. Part of me wanted to join them. Just give in, like Ted.

Hex could tell what I was thinking so he took my face in his hands and looked right at me. He promised me that I would see my family again. He reminded me that I hadn't given up in the pub or in the tunnels or in the fields. Theresa was one middle-aged woman. We couldn't let her stop us. Then he gave me a kiss!

And, well it was almost a blur really, but that's how I then found myself pointing a gun at someone. Hex had hammered on the cellar door, screaming for Theresa. Eventually, she'd come down to see what the problem was. He'd explained that he was on this planet with his friend, the Doctor. He said that they'd want to know he'd been captured because he was dead important. After the weeks I'd spent with him, I could tell he was acting but he was pretty good at pretending to be really arrogant. It was like he was in charge. He later told me he was just doing an impression of the Doctor. So, somehow, he managed to convince Theresa to take him back

upstairs to the kitchen so that she could contact her masters and show them her prize capture! Perhaps they'd give her pizza as a treat. But, as they stood on the cellar steps, her pointing the gun at Hex with one hand and closing the door with the other, I suddenly 86

lunged at her. She fell forwards and the gun went off. I screamed for Hex but he shouted that he was okay and tried to help me as I struggled with Theresa. I'd never been in a fight before! We were rolling about on the cellar steps and, I think it was because I glanced back at her other prisoners which got me so mad, I managed to

overpower her and grab the gun! I actually pointed the pistol in between her eyes and told her to stay still. I wasn't even shaking! A few weeks before I'd spent my life moving things around on a

computer screen, watching telly, eating pizza. And now? Now I was somehow rescuing a load of people by fighting an old woman and holding a gun in her face!

Hex said we needed to return upstairs as Theresa must have some way of communicating with her masters. We needed her to tell them that she hadn't caught anyone this week so there was no need for them to come out to the farm. It would give everyone there a better chance of surviving.

We stood in the kitchen, watching her make the call. She was

trembling as she operated this alien device that had been installed next to a microwave. I tried to block out the voice that came out of it.

Even their voices sounded alien and wrong and... I just pointed the gun at her while Hex told her what she was going to say. I remember thinking that this would be it. We were going to be fine.

That was my final thought before my world featly changed.

Before she started speaking to them Theresa glanced back at me.

I stared back at her defiantly, then realised she wasn't looking at me. She was looking at some photographs on the wall. Lovely

framed photographs of lovely Theresa and her lovely family. And, suddenly, I knew what she was going to do. And she looked me in the eye, shook her head and said she was sorry. I screamed

something at Hex and she started telling her masters about us and I felt my finger move and heard something.

I looked down and saw blood oozing between the floor tiles

towards my feet. I dropped the gun and just stared at it. Hex jumped up from Theresa's body, ran towards me and grabbed the gun. He took aim and shot at the communications device. Then he spun

round and clutched me before I could fall. I wasn't making a noise.

I was just staring at the person I'd –

REMAINDER OF EXTRACT MISSING

Holly stared at the screen.

Her hand shaking, she closed the attachment.

And, as she sat there in silence, she heard the first rumble of thunder from outside.

There was a storm coming.

87

Hide and Seek

Ian Farrington

Three days before we fled the planet, like all the other space fleet pilots not on active duty, I'd been in the mess watching the rid-

screens. The Dalek attack had started a few hours before, so the reports were getting less frequent. And more vague. More

casualties. Fewer details. I was itching to get an assignment, but they kept telling me to stay put.

'Listen, Timmins,' the roster clerk said to me, 'when we need

your skills, we'll call for you. You're not a fighter; you're not a soldier. You'd be no use at this stage, trust me. You're a pilot. And when we have a ship available for you, you'll see some action.'

I'd wanted to scream. Action? I didn't want any 'action'. I'm a natural coward: that's why I signed up as a pilot rather than for the infantry. The safety of the cockpit had been far more appealing to me than heroics on the front. No, I just wanted to get off-world. If these Daleks were as savage as we'd been hearing about from the news broadcasts, I'd be better off setting my own course and speed.

I sat there for two whole days – me and about twenty other lads, pilots all. The fleet has always had far more pilots than ships; something to do with labour laws and the maximum hours you can operate a ship before being relieved. We played cards and chatted occasionally. No one wanted to talk about the war.

On the third day, I was woken suddenly. I'd not slept well, as you'd expect, but must have closed my eyes as I lay on a mess

bench. The atmosphere in the room changed as a woman walked in

– all authoritative and military. It was Captain Tillyard, but I didn't know that at the time.

She waited for the remaining six of us – the only pilots left at the fleet's disposal – to stand up, then said, 'Pay attention. Here are your assignments.' She turned to each of us as she said our name.

'Lektor, get to landing bay got; the *Domino* blasts off in twenty minutes. Dranko, find Admiral Tess and shuttle him up to his

command ship. Lessur, you'll need to run; the *Rianno* leaves as soon as you're on board. Henders, go to the hospital; they ran out of 88

ambulance pilots yesterday. Zokas, landing bay 707; the *Driffin* is waiting for you.'

She then turned to me.

‘Timmins... you’re with me.’

Half an hour later, we were on the captain’s ship, a small shuttle usually used for cargo transportation. She explained, quickly but clearly, that she’d personally taken charge of a mission of mercy and needed a good pilot. We were to pick up some refugees from near the coast – being so far from the city, they couldn’t get to the fleetport in time – and, in the captain’s words, ‘run away’.

‘Our man there is rounding the refugees up,’ she said. ‘About

forty of them. All I need you to do is drop down long enough for them to get on board, then head for orbit. Chose the coords yourself.

Just get us away.’

‘Are we the only crew?’ I asked.

‘The job only takes two.’

The refugees, it turned out, were a number of families from an isolated coastal village. As we approached their position, I spotted them on the scope: 43 life traces, all huddled together in a forest clearing. The weather was atrocious – torrential rain and a

horizontal gale. It made landing tricky, but nothing I couldn’t handle. As I touched down, I saw our quarry for the first time through the cockpit’s window.

It hit me really for the first time that we were picking up people, real people. I’d always flown for the military – when you weren’t piloting troop ships, you were transporting goods or, very

occasionally, collecting some dignitary or other. I’m not close to my family, never have been, but seeing the old folk amongst the crowd made me wonder where my parents were, and if they were safe.

As soon as we’d touched down, the captain opened the cargo

door and the locals flooded aboard. I waited, watching the control panel for the green light that meant we could go. The engine hum was constant, the sound of rain hitting the windows numbed by the glass’s thickness.

I watched the light. Red. Red. I waited for it to turn green. Red.

Red –

‘Take off! Now!’

It was a young woman, who’d run into the cockpit. She was small and scrawny and her clothes brightly coloured – clearly no part of the military.

‘Sorry, miss, but I’ve got to wait –’

‘Captain Tillyard says you’re to take off immediately!’

I didn’t know what to do. There was something about her that I 89

trusted implicitly, but I had no idea who she was. The light

remained steadfastly red.

‘Who do you think you are?’

She was about to answer when the captain ran in behind her. ‘Do as Jo says!’

I spun round and started the take-off procedure. I had to override the controls to get past the failsafe designed to stop the ship taking off with its cargo doors open. And as we lifted off, I saw them.

Daleks. Hundreds of them. Some on the ground; some on discs,

streaking through the air. All headed towards our position. They’d landed on the planet. The invasion had begun. It hit me, wholly and simply, that we’d lost.

‘Captain?’ I said. ‘The door?’

‘We need it open, Timmins. Just blast away.’

The captain took Jo by the shoulders and sat her down in the co-pilot’s seat. ‘Strap yourself in,’ she said. ‘And don’t touch

anything.’ As the captain fled from the cockpit again, I pulled back on the alt-lever and we pulled up, our speed increasing. While I held on to the elevation stick, I turned to the bank of vid-monitors and flicked cam one to the cargo bay: the screen showed the door open, the land outside disappearing fast. I saw a man, holding on to a wall brace with one hand. In his other, he was pushing a Dalek out of the cargo bay! The Dalek fired its ray gun, again and again, but its aim was off

as it fell out of the door. I thought it would fall, and I imagined it crashing to the ground below, but no sooner was it out than it powered up the rockets in its base and righted itself in the air.

The man – I found out later he was just called 'Doctor' –

slammed the door shut, then raced out of the vid-screen's range. I pulled back as hard as I could on the alt-lever; I almost pulled the stick from its knuckle. Behind me, I could hear someone dash into the cockpit.

'Doctor!' cried the girl.

'Yes, hello, Jo,' he said warmly. 'Now, Captain Tillyard. How's your pilot?'

'The best available,' she said. 'That's why we've got him.'

Her words made me pull back even harder as we broke the

planet's atmos and away out of orbit.

After a few minutes we were clear of the system and the captain checked the scope. I set the ship's flight plan and, for the first time in ages, turned round. Seeing the Doctor in the flesh, not just on the scanner screen, produced an odd feeling.

He was more colourful than I'd imagined – and I don't just mean 90

because the vid was in black and white. He was taller, and slightly older, than I'd reckoned from his battle with the Dalek. And his nose was more prominent.

'No sign of them,' said the captain. 'No Dalek fleet.' She checked with me that we were on the right course, then turned to our new crewmates. 'Well, Doctor,' she said, 'we got away. We wouldn't have managed it without you.'

'I keep telling you, Captain. It's your ship. Your responsibility. If we were a help, then...' He smiled. 'Well, I'm glad.'

It was strange for the Doctor to be modest – I'd learn that over the next few hours. His friend, Jo, spotted it too, and winked at me complicitly.

'Do you really think we can outrun this Dalek attack force?'

asked the captain.

‘It’s hard to tell,’ said the Doctor, studying one of the read-out displays on my control panel. ‘It does seem unlikely, but that’s no reason not to try.’

But outrun them we did, at least to begin with. It seemed that our evacuation had been a success: we’d picked up the people, evaded the Daleks, and got out of the system unscathed. After about an hour, the captain, the Doctor and Jo returned to the cockpit – they’d been down below, calming our guests, I suppose – and I managed to hook up to a sub-space signal so we could watch some news

reports.

In between the static, we learnt that our home wasn’t the only planet to fall to the Daleks. The whole system had gone; millions had been killed. We’d been lucky, and we all knew it.

‘So, Captain,’ said the Doctor after the last of the signal had gone, ‘you said you knew where we were heading...’

‘Yes,’ she said and closed the cockpit door. ‘Credence. It’s a planet not too far from here. With the course I’ve given you,

Timmins, we should be there within hours.’

I’d twigged that we were heading out to a sector I didn’t know too well. There were worlds that far out, but I’d never met anyone who’d been there.

‘Credence?’ said Jo. ‘What a funny name.’

‘It’s the planet itself that concerns me,’ said the Doctor. ‘I can’t say I’ve ever heard of it.’

‘It’s level six,’ said the captain.

The Doctor turned to Jo and explained to her that that was about the same development her home planet had been at around the time of her birth. To this day, I still don’t know where the pair of them were from. One of the backward worlds, from their weird taste in 91

clothing.

The captain continued: ‘I’ve got it on good authority that we’ll be safe there. No more running. No more looking over our shoulders.’

She sat down in the co-pilot's seat and ran the back of her hand across her forehead. 'It's the only place I know we can go.'

'Quite right, Captain,' said the Doctor. 'Your actions have just saved many lives.'

It was an odd relationship – the captain and the Doctor's. She was clearly experienced, strong and knew what she wanted. But in the time I spent with her, I often saw her look to the Doctor for advice.

Jo too was obviously under the Doctor's spell. I don't think she worked for him or anything like that – I could see they were good friends.

But the captain fascinated me. She gave off this aura of being in control. I suppose all military commanders do that. I've flown for enough of them and they're largely the same. Captain Tillyard, however, also sometimes seemed like she was riddled with doubt. I later found out why.

We hit trouble a few hours into the flight. Our long-range scope had picked up some targets off our port side – Daleks. At that distance, we couldn't be sure what they were doing. The Doctor said that they weren't getting any closer, but we all agreed that we shouldn't hang around.

'All good in theory,' I said. 'But we're at full-burn already. To be honest, Captain, this landfall of yours is only just within our fuel range.'

'Well,' said the Doctor, suddenly smiling, 'let's see what we can do about that.'

He was soon down on the cockpit floor, lying on his back, with his head and shoulders under the control desk. We heard him

fiddling away with the wirings, and occasionally the shrill whine of an electronic fusion device he'd taken from his jacket's breast pocket. 'We'll have this fine ship pulling under heavier steam!' he said, his voice slightly muffled.

As he worked away, the captain left us. She said she needed some rest, and that I was to come and find her after an hour. I kept my eyes on the scanner and the readings, but a pre-ordered course leaves very little for the pilot to do. I've heard of some who sleep at the desk; others who leave it to the auto-lock and don't even return to the

cockpit until they're approaching planet-fall.

I don't know – maybe it's my military training, but I've always felt the need to stay at my post. It makes me feel like I'm doing something. Or, at any rate, like I'm giving off that impression.

92

Jo smiled at me and asked me questions. What was my name?

How old was I? She was just making conversation, but I appreciated it a lot. For about ten minutes, I didn't think once of the Daleks.

'We've been travelling for – what is it, Doctor?' said Jo.

'Hmm?' came the reply. He was still busy tinkering away under

my control desk. It was only because the captain hadn't seen fit to question what he was doing that I'd allowed him to fiddle under there. For all I knew, he could have been making things worse.

Jo laughed, and turned back to me. 'Well, it's been about two

weeks – from our point of view.'

'Your point of view?' I asked, but she quickly moved on.

'Yes. We travel a lot. Don't we, Doctor?'

'Hmm?' he said.

I asked Jo how she knew the captain.

'We met her a couple of days ago. We were visiting Cami.'

'Cami?' I asked.

'The town where you rescued the people from. It's a lovely

place... or was, I should say.' She smiled, remembering something.

'The mayor really didn't like the Doctor when we first arrived, but then the Doctor found out who'd been stealing the committee funds

– they'd been having this spate of robberies, you see. But, then, just as we were going to make a – what did you call it, Doctor?'

'A discreet exit,' he said from under the control desk

‘... a discreet exit, yes. Well, just as we were going to leg it, Captain Tillyard arrived. She tried convincing everyone to leave.

The attack had only just begun, and she said the planet would be overrun within days. To be honest, not many people believed her –

it was only because the Doctor agreed with her that we managed to persuade the mayor and the villagers to evacuate. If we hadn’t been there...’

‘How did the Doctor get them to change their minds?’

‘We’ve met the Daleks before. We know what they’re like.’

Twelve years of military service and I’d been none the wiser

when the attack came. Not one of us had ever come across the

Daleks before, and here were two people who claimed to have ‘met’

them. To this day, I wish I knew where the Doctor and Jo had come from, who they really were. And what happened to them after we escaped from Credence.

‘You know something, Timmins?’ the Doctor said. From the

sound of his voice, he had his little sonic gizmo in his mouth.

‘Captain Tillyard is a remarkable woman. To have organised an

evacuation of a village at that short notice required clear, quick thinking. After she left us to pack up the villagers and get them 93

ready, she can’t have had time for anything other than going back to the city to get you.’

‘She did more than that, Doctor,’ I said. ‘The captain has

command responsibilities – she deployed other pilots and talked to the generals before we left.’

Hindsight’s a wonderful thing, isn’t it? I could claim that I knew straight away why things didn’t add up in their story, but I didn’t. I had to ask the Doctor.

‘Why did she go all the way out to the village and then come

back? Why not radio over? And why that village anyway? I don't mean to be cruel, but it's hardly important in the grand scheme of things. We must have left countless people we could have saved quicker and more easily. Why that village?'

'Yes, Doctor?' said Jo. 'Why?'

He pulled himself out from under the control desk and locked the panel back in place.

'She didn't radio in because she didn't think to. Despite her

training and experience, when the attack came, her first thought was to go Cami. And why that particular village... well, Jo, isn't it obvious?'

She shook her head.

'Oh, come on. Go down to the cargo hold and look at the mayor.

Then look at Captain Tillyard...'

'Oh, my!' said Jo.

'What?' I asked.

'Our captain comes from Cami,' said the Doctor. 'The mayor's

her brother. No doubt, her parents are amongst the 40 villagers we rescued. Other relatives, her friends too. Your system's upgraded, by the way.'

'Eh?' I said.

'Your flight system. I think you'll find it has 33 point three per cent more capacity.'

Nervously, I tried it. He was right – I was able to up our speed by a third.

The Doctor smiled, proud of himself. 'Jo, what's zero point three recurring multiplied by three?'

'Um,' she said, a bit unsure of why he'd asked. 'Zero point nine recurring?'

'Okay.' He leant against the wall, scratching the back of his neck.

‘And what’s zero point three recurring as a fraction?’

‘A third.’

‘And what are three thirds?’

Jo was about to answer, then stopped herself. After a moment,

she said, ‘One?’

‘Hmm.’ The Doctor looked into the middle distance. ‘So, does

that mean 0.9 recurring is actually the same thing as one?’

Again Jo considered, like she was taking some test. ‘I suppose it depends where you are when you look at it,’ she said

I laughed, for the first time in days. ‘Wherever did you two come from?’

‘We’ve been to a lot of different places,’ said Jo, avoiding the question.

‘I wish I knew where Credence was,’ the Doctor murmured to

himself. Jo asked him what he meant, but he just said he was

worried because he hadn’t heard of it.

‘Despite what you may think, Doctor,’ teased Jo, ‘you don’t

know everything!’

With our increased speed set and locked, I recalculated the flight-plan and reckoned that we could make Credence within the hour.

The first half of that dragged interminably. The Doctor and Jo had gone below to rest and grab something to eat, leaving me looking at the scanner every ten seconds and the flight-plan read-out every twenty. ‘Knock knock,’ said the captain as she walked in. ‘What’s the latest?’ Stifling a yawn, 1 told her that, thanks to the Doctor’s tweak of the flight-comp, planet-fall would be in around 15

minutes.

‘Good,’ she said. ‘Now, go and walk around the hold for at least half of

that. When we reach Credence, I'll need you awake and on form. Stretch your legs, have some food. Go on.'

I didn't need telling twice – life as a military pilot taught you many things, but nothing more vital than to take the breaks when you're offered them. I wandered down the corridor, and through the bulkhead that took me down to the hold. Everyone was sat on the floor, mostly around the edges, leaning against the walls. Some of the people were asleep, others talking quietly.

As well as the villagers, the captain had managed to get supplies loaded aboard. People made themselves comfortable amid the

towers of food crates and blankets and materials. In the far corner stood an unlikely blue cubicle.

The Doctor and Jo were sitting with the mayor – and, boy, the

Doctor had hit it on the head. The mayor was a dead ringer for the captain. The same distinctive forehead and chin. I nodded to Jo as I passed them, and went over to where someone had cracked open

some supply boxes – I took a water bottle, some fruit and an energy sweet.

I was going to go and sit with the Doctor and Jo for a few

minutes, but I could hear the Doctor talking, telling the mayor about the Daleks. He was explaining who they were, where they came

from, and what they were capable of. 1 thought of my family again, didn't want to hear any more, and left as quickly as I could.

Outside the cockpit door, I leaned against the wall with my head resting on the warm metal. I breathed in and out, then took a bite of the energy sweet. Awful stuff, but they stave away sleep for hours on end. I've seen pilots live off them for days at a time.

'... almost... on arrival, we...'

I could hear the captain talking inside the cockpit. Slowly, I peeked in through the door – there she was, talking quietly into a headset. She had her back to me.

You know, every single time I've thought about this since it

happened, I've wondered why she had her back to the door. She

didn't want to get caught – that's why she'd sent me off to the hold, why she was talking in hushed tones – so why not keep an eye on the door? I suppose maybe she was tired, or careless, or cocky. One person I once told this story to suggested that perhaps the captain wanted to be caught, that she wasn't sure she was doing the right thing. That she needed someone to know what she was up to but

couldn't tell anyone herself.

I like to think that's true.

'We've increased our speed,' she was saying, 'so we'll reach

orbit within three rels. Please transmit the landing data to our flight-comp.' The reply wasn't loud, as I could only hear it coming from the headset the captain was holding up to her ear – but it was clear, and it scared me to death.

It was a Dalek voice.

'Acknowledged!' it said. 'We will transmit the data now!'

'And, what, you'll be waiting for us when we land?'

'That is correct!'

The captain had betrayed us! She was in league with the Daleks, who were on Credence, waiting for our arrival.

I bolted – just had to get away. I hadn't known Captain Tillyard for more than a day, but I'd completely trusted her. You do in situations like that. Your life is on the line, theirs too, so you all sign up to this unspoken code. We're in it together, we have to rely on each other. Never leave a man behind. All that military

nonsense. Except you learn it isn't nonsense – it has a very direct purpose. It keeps people alive, and sane.

I took the metal steps down to the cargo bay two at a time.

Immediately, the Doctor knew something was wrong and sprang up towards me.

‘Timmins,’ he said. ‘Whatever’s the matter?’

‘Did you know?’ I said. How could I trust him and Jo as well?

For all knew, they were as much in on the deceit as Tillyard was.

‘Know what?’ asked Jo.

I faltered. The rage was building inside me, but I couldn’t say it. I couldn’t say in front of everyone in the hold that the only planet-fall within our fuel range was a Dalek-occupied world. That they were waiting for us.

‘Where... where we’re going.’

‘I know we’re going to a planet called Credence,’ said the

Doctor. ‘Captain Tillyard selected it. She told us everyone would be safe there.’ Slowly, the Doctor and Jo walked over to me, and the tension defused. People started murmuring between themselves, and we were able to talk amongst ourselves.

‘Credence,’ I whispered. ‘The Daleks are there, waiting for us.’

The Doctor’s face was ashen. ‘How do you know this?’

‘Because I’ve just overheard your precious Captain Tillyard

talking to them. She’s a traitor.’

‘No...’ Jo turned to the Doctor. ‘She can’t be, Doctor.’

He looked up the steps that led to the cockpit, and I saw his face change. He looked as angry as I’ve ever seen anyone look. Jo and I followed him up to the cockpit. We found the captain in my seat, looking tired but innocent.

‘Doctor,’ she said. ‘What’s...’

He closed the door once we were inside, then sat down next to the captain. ‘Tell me what’s going on,’ he said to her.

‘What do you mean?’

He sighed. ‘Are you taking these people to the Daleks?’

The captain seemed to consider for a moment, but as I saw it, it

seemed like a relief to her.

‘Yes,’ she said.

Jo took a step forward. ‘We trusted you! You said you could get the villagers to safety, and we trusted you.’

‘They will be safe. All of them. All of us.’

‘How can you say that? We know what the Daleks are like. We’ll all be killed as soon as we land!’ Jo was almost crying now, and turned to me. ‘Turn the ship around.’

I told her I couldn’t. We didn’t have enough fuel to go anywhere else, nor enough oxygen or supplies to last long in space.

‘So, what,’ she said, ‘we’re just going to head straight for the Daleks? That’s madness!’

I was still in a state of shock. We’d escaped the Daleks, got away.

We’d trusted the captain to get us somewhere safe. And now she 97

was betraying us. If I hadn’t been so numb, I might have hit her.

‘Doctor?’ Jo was getting hysterical. ‘Say something! What are we going to do?’

He didn’t look the captain in the eye – I don’t think he could. He spoke slowly, commandingly, trying to keep a lid on his anger.

‘Explain it to us, Captain Tillyard. Tell us what you’ve done. Tell us why you’ve sentenced us all to death.’

‘It’s the best option –’

‘The best option!’ The Doctor snapped. ‘How could it possibly be the best option?’

The captain stared out of the cockpit’s window I followed her

gaze, and realised that for the first time we could see Credence. It was still far off, but gradually it was getting bigger. It looked just like home. ‘I heard about Credence a few hours after the Daleks first attacked our system,’ said the captain. ‘I was called into an emergency meeting in Government House. Every captain stationed in the city was there, some generals as well. And the admiral. We didn’t really know

who the Daleks were then, just that they'd

attacked and that, well, we didn't have much in the way of

resistance. Do you know what the population is these days? More than two hundred thousand. The strategists told us straight: there was no way to win, no way to repel the Daleks. The only option we had was to flee. Of course, we couldn't tell anyone – it would have caused a mass panic.'

'Quite,' said the Doctor. 'When hundreds of thousands are going to die, the last thing you want is looting and riots.'

'The plan was simple. The fleet would be sent to engage the

Daleks. We all knew... we all knew it was suicide. But we had to keep the Dalek fleet busy. Meanwhile, each captain was assigned a mission. Mine was to evacuate a village near the coast.'

'Rather convenient,' I said. There was no reason to be deferential to her now. 'The mission you're "assigned" just happens to mean saving your own family.'

I don't think she'd realised we'd figured that out Perhaps she wasn't going to mention it, I don't know. But there was no point lying any more.

'Well,' she said. 'When I say assigned... we were allowed to pick our own missions. I know it's selfish. I know it's cowardly. But would any of you have done differently? Doctor? If you'd been able to save Jo, would you have just left her?'

He didn't answer.

'I don't understand,' said Jo. 'I can see why you wanted to rescue the villagers, but why are we now heading for the Daleks?'

The captain turned on her angrily. 'Because on Credence, we'll be safe!'

'Safe?' I said. 'How could we possibly be safe? I heard you

talking to them, Captain. I stood in that doorway and listened to you. They know we're coming.'

I'll never forget how the captain explained it. In a weird way, it seemed to make sense. And whenever I've gone over these events –

in my head or telling others about them – I always try to emphasise that Captain Tillyard wasn't insane or evil or dangerous. She

genuinely thought she was doing the right thing.

'At that meeting at Government House, we were told about

Credence. Apparently the president has known about it for weeks. It seems the attack wasn't the first time the top brass had heard of the Daleks. They'd invaded three neighbouring systems, and killed

billions. One of the generals asked why he had been kept out of the loop, why it was only now the military was being told about this clear and present threat to our planet. It was calmly explained to him that the president had decided upon a policy of... how did they put it? "Not rocking the boat". They'd decided we should sit tight, not draw attention to ourselves, and hope that the Daleks kept away.

Our global population is... was, after all, minuscule compared to most planets; we had few natural resources; we were out of the way.

The government had cancelled all inter-system fleet deployments, pulled back a few of our research probes.

'Of course, it didn't work. The Daleks found us. But before they did, the brass had heard about Credence. It's the fourth planet of system 5480. Before the Daleks arrived, it wasn't too different to home. But rather than wipe everyone out, on Credence the Daleks kept people alive. Why, we're not quite sure. Most people have to work, of course – in mines, we think. Credence has huge mineral deposits. But people are allowed to live. Society has survived.

There are still schools, hospitals – even pubs and gyms, would you believe. No one has much, but no one goes without either. People are given food and the Daleks make sure there's no crime.'

The Doctor was furious. We all were, but he was the one who

rounded on her.

'You fool,' he said. 'You stupid, naive fool. You have no idea what the Daleks are like. Being forced to work in mines – yes, that sounds like them. But as for the rest... it's sheer nonsense, my dear Captain. As

you'll find out the moment we land.'

The captain admitted it was hardly perfect. But faced with the choices, what was she meant to do? The intelligence reports, it seems, had concluded that as long as the Daleks have the labour to 99

work the factories, they more or less leave people alone.

It sounded plausible. It really did.

The flight-comp started to beep-beep-beep. We were in orbit. Out of the cockpit window, Credence looked massive. We were pitched towards its main continent, breaking our way into the atmosphere.

Red sparks were flying off the hull's atmos-shield, and the whole ship began to rattle.

'Captain, listen to me.' The Doctor had to raise his voice to be heard. 'I know the Daleks. I've seen the damage they've done. The destruction they've brought. We can't land on this planet.'

'Well, it's too late now,' said the captain. 'We have to buckle ourselves in for landing. I'll go and make sure everyone's okay down below.'

'Doctor,' said Jo once the captain had left. 'The TARDIS. We

could take everyone away!'

'No we couldn't, Jo,' he said sadly. 'The Time Lords would

never allow us to take forty-odd people out of the timeline.'

'But surely even they –' she began, before an air pocket knocked her from her feet

'Hold on to something,' I said. 'It's going to be rocky for a bit.'

The landing was rough. At first, I had to manually plot the course

–and do so on only four per cent fuel capacity. Then I had to weave past a space station on a geo-centric orbit: as we got closer, our communication scope pinged. I hit the button and the cockpit was filled with an endlessly looping broadcast:

'Welcome to Credence,' said an oddly dispassionate human

voice. 'We offer refuge to all displaced citizens willing to work for

their freedom.'

'Oh, come on,' said the Doctor. 'It's clearly a trap.'

During the final descent, we didn't talk. The noise in the cockpit during a landing always surprises people. There are the engines powering against the atmosphere, the rattling of the hull, the constant alarms and readings on the desk. I don't think any of us minded the noise – we were grateful it made it difficult to think about what we were about to walk into.

When we levelled out, we were above a city. The ruin of a city.

The flight-comp took over and we were on auto-pilot. The

captain must have locked in the changes herself. The ship took itself out, beyond the buildings and roadways, to a simple, flat expanse of a landing area. We could see about twenty Daleks waiting for us.

Once the ship hit the concrete landing pad, the engines came to rest. Slowly, the Doctor, Jo and I unbuckled our safety straps and stood to leave the cockpit.

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I don't think I've ever been more scared in my life.

Down in the hold, the villagers were all packed up and ready.

Captain Tillyard was at the front, standing next to the closed cargo doors. The Doctor walked over and leaned in close.

'It's not too late, Captain,' he said. 'We can always fight.'

When the captain turned to face him, I saw that she was crying.

'Fight?' she said. 'This is a transport ship with 43 civilians on it.

Credence is ruled by an entire Dalek taskforce. Fight? Do you really think we could win?'

He put his hand on her shoulder. 'There's always hope, Captain.'

The doors opened. The Daleks must have opened them from the

outside, or maybe it was part of Tillyard's locked-in commands to the ship's flight-comp. The gust of air was warm and sandy. Your first

breath after a space flight is always an odd experience.

The captain walked forward, down the landing ramp. We could

see the Daleks about twenty metres away. They were oddly static, still, lifeless. Then, slowly, a lead Dalek moved towards us.

'We seek asylum,' called out the captain. 'There are over forty of us. We wish to live and work here.'

What happened next, I've played over in my head time and time

again – I've dreamt about it every night since I got to safety. The Dalek shot the captain, killing her so quickly she hadn't even time to scream. It had all been propaganda. A Dalek trick to get missing survivors to head straight into their clutches. Years later, I went back to Credence – there's a museum there now. Now the Daleks

have gone. They'd kept the city active, to try to maintain the illusion: Daleks had manned the fleetport control towers, the trains had still run... From orbit or high altitude, the city looked like it was thriving. But the Daleks had exterminated the people who had lived there long before we arrived. 'Quickly!' shouted the Doctor. 'Get back.' He rushed over to the controls and slammed the cargo doors shut. 'Everyone sit down and hold on to something.'

The entire ship juddered from side to side as Dalek gun blasts rocked the hull. The noise was deafening: each shot reverberated throughout the bay, and everything rattled. I had no idea if the ship could take the pummelling. I suppose it was designed to survive the vacuum of space, but at the time I was convinced one of the blasts would break through.

'Timmins!' The Doctor grabbed me by the arm and began to pull

me up the steps to the cockpit. 'We have to take off. It's our only chance.' It was useless, I told him. We barely had enough fuel to reach orbit –what were we going to do then? The Doctor said that at least it would buy us some time. We raced up to the cockpit, and I 101

starting programming the flight-comp. I heard Jo run in behind us.

'Look!' she screamed, and the Doctor and I looked out of the

cockpit window. Daleks were surrounding us. Some on the ground, encircling the ship; others on transolar discs. Still they blasted away at

us, but hull integrity was at 35 per cent – and falling with every new volley.

'Here we go!' I said as I pulled back on the stick. We hit a couple of flying Daleks on our way up – it sounds odd, but I think we were knocked off our path more than they were. Even at full burn, we couldn't totally outrun them. The Daleks on the discs followed us up, up, up, into the stratosphere and out into space.

'What now?' I shouted. 'We've only enough fuel for a few

minutes' burn.'

The Doctor was leaning over the control desk, checking the

proximity scope. 'Timmins,' he said. 'Can you head here?'

I looked over. He was pointing at a cluster of targets off our starboard bow.

'Are you mad?' I said. 'Those are more Daleks!'

'I think you'll find,' he said, with a wry smile, 'that they're the other ships Captain Tillyard talked about.'

'What other ships?' shouted Jo.

'She said each captain had a mission – she meant a rescue

mission. Each captain in the fleet had to collect survivors and bring them here. Perhaps some of them got here before we did, but, look –

these ones are still on their way. We can intercept them, warn them what Credence is really like.'

'And go where, Doctor?'

'That, Mr Timmins, is up to you.'

And that was the last time I ever saw him or Jo. Turning us

round, even ninety degrees, at full burn, and on little fuel, took some doing. The sweat was pouring from my forehead by the time I was able to lock-in the coords and lean back from the flight stick.

The Doctor and Jo weren't there. I went to the bay, and shouted down from the top step, asking everyone where they had gone. It should

have been the Doctor to explain everything to the convoy, to help us pool our resources and choose where we'd head next. And I thought Jo and I could... well, that doesn't matter.

The Cami mayor told me the Doctor had said something about a

discreet exit, and got inside the blue hut... which, he claimed, had simply vanished into thin air.

That's the bit I usually leave out when I tell this story. No one ever believes it.

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The Eighth Wonder of the World

Simon Guerrier

... and this ... (destructive) spirit,

Of barbarian legend,

Truly did not love,

... destroyed on account of order,

His master the cause neither.

... nothing much...

... an iron boxed spirit.

Sappho, P. Oxy. 1787, tr. 5

'You do me a great discourtesy,' laughed Charles Newton the very first time they met him. 'I remember perfectly well who you are.'

He wiped his hand in his handkerchief before offering it to the Doctor to shake. 'Hello, Evelyn! Hello, Doctor! I like the get-up.

What brings you to the frenzy of Bodrum?'

The Doctor looked quickly at Evelyn, as if to say, 'Sometimes

this happens,' and, 'Don't let on to him,' and also, 'But you know all this anyway, don't you?' The general effect of this was to cause the pom-poms on top of his hat to bounce. The Doctor's airy local dress

might have made him look even sillier than usual, but it clearly kept him cool. The awnings kept the worst of the mid-afternoon sun off the dig, but it was still a sweltering day.

Evelyn had politely declined his offer of contemporary corsets and hoops, preferring shorts and a baggy old T-shirt – the uniform of archaeologists in her own time. She raised an eyebrow at him, as if to say, 'Just get on with it.'

Turning back to Newton, the Doctor said affably, 'We heard you were here, Charles, so we thought we'd look in on you. How long can it have been?'

Newton considered. 'Three or four years? You remember that

dinner we had, and the dancing...' She'd half expected him to be in full collar and coat but he had – for a nineteenth-century gentleman

– a rather rakish style with a dash of the Orient. He had a full beard

and dark, bushy hair, and a public-schoolboy athleticism that his biography put down to a daily swim. Evelyn felt glad she was not twenty years younger or the poor man might have been in some

trouble.

'Yes, indeed,' laughed the Doctor as if of course he remembered.

'It just doesn't seem that long ago. Does it, Evelyn?'

'No, Doctor,' she replied, shaking her head at him. Honestly,

he'd be late for his own funeral.

They were a couple of months out. He had promised her January

1857 and the chance to see history as it happened. Newton's team were unearthing the fourth-century BCE funerary temple of King Mausolus, from which the word 'mausoleum' came. By Evelyn's

time, the temple stood in the British Museum in London. She had written part of her Master's about how they'd put it all back

together.

What she'd really wanted to see was who actually discovered it.

In fifty years' time there'd be fierce debate about how Newton had not properly credited one of his team and effectively stolen the glory. He'd be dead by then – unable either to defend his reputation or admit his disgrace. She'd only just read a new book about him, which had reignited her youthful fury to know one way or the other.

At least if Newton already knew them it meant they'd get another go finding out. It would all work out in time. She let him lead her and the Doctor to where the work was going on. The noise surprised her. Local Turks chattered and pointed at all the ramshackle

activity. Bodrum was a tiny fishing village at this point in its history, and this building site was the best show they'd had in living memory.

They passed through the crowd and into the work area, centred on a crude scaffold. Scarlet-tanned sailors and conscripted locals bickered good-naturedly as they took their places. In some medley of language they counted back from three then all began dragging at the ropes. The Doctor and Newton hurried to help on one thick

cord. Evelyn knew better than to get involved herself – it'd

scandalise the Englishmen and do her heart no good.

It proved to be quick work, what with so many helping. Men

cried out as they felt their quarry yield. Something began to stir below the scaffold. The beams and ropes creaked with strain and a huge tooth of stone ruptured from under the earth. The men did not cheer until the thing sat resolutely out in the open, then ambled away to a well-deserved ration of grog.

Newton walked around the stone slowly, sharing his observations with a little man with a sketchbook. Evelyn took her time joining 104

them, not wanting to be in their way. She recognised the simple pattern carved into one edge of the stone and, when she reached the two men, she recognised the sketch. The illustrator was G. F. Watts and he'd just dashed off figure four from her Master's thesis.

The Doctor joined them. 'Nice bit of rock,' he said. Evelyn

thumped his shoulder.

'You're looking at one of the Seven Wonders of the World!' said Newton proudly.

They stood in silence for a moment, regarding their ancient prize.

It had only been 'lost' for 35o years – after an earthquake had levelled the mausoleum. But until then, the tomb had stood for two millennia and it was as if as they could see all those years wrought in it. Evelyn had travelled with the Doctor a long time but the expanse of history still awed her.

'The seven wonders were listed in the second century before

Christ by the chronicler, Philo of Byzantium,' Newton continued.

'Or "Phil from Istanbul" to his friends,' said the Doctor. Evelyn assumed the TARDIS would ensure Newton and Watts heard it as

"Constantinople", or they wouldn't appreciate the joke. Not that there was much to appreciate.

Watts wrinkled his nose. 'Phillip is a different name,' he said. 'It means "horse-lover". Philo would more accurately mean...' he

stared up into the sky as he considered. 'Lovey.'

The men laughed at the thought of 'Lovey the famous ancient

chronicler!' Evelyn, however, sighed.

'Isn't this educational?' asked the Doctor, still teasing.

'No,' she said. 'It wasn't Philo at all. The seven wonders were the work of Antipater of Sidon, and he might have been citing someone else's work anyway.'

'But Hercher says...' began Newton.

'Rudolf Hercher is wrong,' she said. 'And didn't bother to check his references.' She knew she was being rude but the whole day was going wrong.

For a moment they stood under the terrible sun staring at one

another. And then Newton broke into a broad grin. 'I'd forgotten how well read you both were,' he said. 'But I've got something to surprise even you two.'

He went over to the stone. 'This side would have faced inside,' he said. He brushed lightly at the sand that masked the stone. It had dried to

dust in the heat and fell easily away at his touch. Evelyn held her breath, seeing brilliant ultramarine emerge, then flashes of vermilion and dun red.

'Don't!' she said, for the millennia-old artwork was immediately 105

attacked by the elements. By the time the stones reached London, there'd be little left of this frieze of parading men and horses, and nothing to corroborate the vivid colour scheme.

'It is startling,' said Newton, stepping back to allow Watts in to sketch the fast-vanishing composition. 'And awful. We destroy as we try to understand...'

'May I see?' asked the Doctor, pushing forward. He wiped his

hand quickly across the rest of the stone's sandy face.

'Doctor!' Evelyn gasped, appalled at how glibly he gave up the fragile treasure below the surface.

'Look,' he said gravely. And amid the brilliant hues of men and livestock, before it was lost to history forever, Evelyn saw the unmistakable shape of a Dalek.

They sent Aku because of his twisted arm. He often got the

dangerous jobs – testing the wet rock, or checking for crocodiles on the riverbank – and sometimes the masters drew lots on whether he'd come back alive.

The other slaves would have bet too, were they only allowed the possessions to wager. Instead they just eyed him severely, as if their hardships were all of his making, as if the crude stub instead of his right hand were the wand that had imprisoned them all. But Aku knew, for his mother had told him, that it was ever thus.

So little Aku was sent to creep round the scaffolding and spy on the pale men and their magic. The masters and slaves who'd been working nearby had fought with them and died, and Aku bore a

knot of glee inside him as he crawled silently by the huge body of Naroo, who had whipped him countless times. Yet he made no

sound or smile, for slaves knew to hide their victories.

Men lay dead across the perfectly smooth stone at the base of the

great tomb, the sand and marble untarnished. Aku had run errands in several battles but this was unlike any he had seen. He wondered what magic the foreign bandits used to kill without spilling blood.

Aku watched for some hours, hidden in the scaffold. Eventually he watched the pale men chase into their obelisk, which melted from the air like a ghost. The other bandits spat fire at the few remaining masters and then they too were gone.

Aku listened. All he could hear was sand sizzling through the

awnings, flicked about by the late-afternoon breeze. When he could wait no longer, he stepped out into the sunshine. The building site was littered with broken stones and people, and he thought how many days' carving had been lost.

But the bandits were not all gone.

The magical box thing was not as tall as a sarcophagus but as

wide as two or three men. It moved purposefully and slowly like cattle did, so he could not be sure if it had seen him. The three reeds sprouting from its side lashed out and around, awkward and jerky as they groped for assistance. They were like his own withered arm.

Aku knew the thing could kill him without need of a cudgel, yet he stepped towards it anyway, smiling and stupid like slaves must.

The thing turned slowly to point a reed at him. Aku, eyes

lowered, saw how it left no tracks in the sand, floating still in the air like a vulture. A strange sort of bird, he thought, to not have any wings. It croaked at him in a voice full of anger and pain. Aku had nursed soldiers to their deaths and knew he could offer one solace.

He reached his good hand out and pressed his fingers gently against the bird-thing's metal side. He expected burning heat, like from armour left out in the sun.

The creature was cold, so cold it gripped his muscles and made his nose itch. For an instant he saw his mother again, crying out to him as they dragged her away...

Aku lay on his back in the sand and his good hand burnt with the

magic. He gazed up into what he now knew was the bird-thing's

eye.

'You are Aku,' said the thing in its slow, creaky voice.

'Yeah,' he said. He had seen inside its head too, had felt its great yearning for orders. Slaves got like that if they grew old, Aku knew.

They obeyed orders for so long that they forgot how to think for themselves, and pined away and died without them.

'You were...' the thing considered. 'Left behind.'

'Yeah.'

Again the thing considered. Then it shuffled back from him about a handspan, as if giving him room to get up. Aku got awkwardly to his feet, feeling dizzy. Everything seemed brighter like he'd stared at the noon sky and he could hear weird and distant voices.

'Boy!'

Across the grassy dune he saw the masters coming and that they brandished cudgels. They had waited and been scared, and now they knew it was safe enough for a stupid slave boy they were angry at themselves for their cowardice. They would beat him until they felt better again, even if it meant they killed him. And they would kill the lonely bird-thing.

No, he thought, they would try.

Aku turned to the first friend he had ever had, that same brilliant glee in his stomach. 'I can give you orders,' he said.

So speaking [Achilles] charged at them like some inhuman

being, showing them no mercy as did the legendary bronze

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and leather fire-bird that many Egyptians revere...

Homer, *The Iliad* 21: 219.

'But it's so green!' said Evelyn. The Doctor plucked an orange from a nearby tree and handed it to her.

It was sometime in September, 223 BCE, and they'd still not

located the Dalek. They were here on her suggestion.

The TARDIS had found none of the tell-tale Dalek signals

anywhere in the pre-Christian period – at least, none the Doctor couldn't already discount. They had tried calling in on Bodrum in several different years, on the off-chance that they got lucky, and saw the earthquake destroy the mausoleum, helped some children escape a war and went to a very good wedding. It had all been

hopeless.

Yet there could be no mistaking the figure on the mausoleum

frieze, and if the Daleks were hiding their signals they must be up to no good. It horrified Evelyn to think of them meddling with history

– she'd had experience before of damage done to the timelines.

Besides, she wasn't going to let the Daleks ruin her life's work studying history. Whatever they were up to in Halicarnassus, she was jolly well going to stop them.

So, while the Doctor had fussed with his tracking equipment,

determined to prove it was working, Evelyn had put on her

professional head. The figure in the frieze could not be mistaken, but it was merely a single source. Really they needed another first-hand account to corroborate it... In fact, if they could find a number of sources, they should be able to track down the Daleks. They just needed a very good library.

'Eureka,' she had said.

'Am I?' the Doctor replied. And then told her that she was

brilliant.

'Alexandria was always verdant,' he said now, plucking an

orange for himself. 'Until the Romans come along, over-farm

everything and begin North Africa's slow descent into desert.'

‘That’s awful!’ said Evelyn, struggling to get through the peel.

She found it hard to believe that this elegant and cultivated city could so easily fall into ruin. And yet she had visited the site herself, on a trip with her dismal excuse for a husband. He had tried, unsuccessfully, to teach her to scuba dive and then gone off in a sulk.

They passed down an avenue of neat paddling pools and hedges

on their way to the great edifice of the library.

‘It’s not so different from what’s happening in your own time,’

said the Doctor softly. ‘Anything of beauty is so easily lost. With 108

the fall of this place, great works of mathematics and philosophy vanish forever, as do the architectural stylings. They don’t work out the same rules and short-cuts again until well into the eighteenth century. And they never replace the orchards and orangeries.’

‘And all just from a lack of care. It used to drive me mad how undergraduates treated the library books.’

‘People studying history should have more respect for the past,’

agreed the Doctor.

They made their way up the steps and into the central lobby. It was even more amazing than her beloved King’s Cross. Evelyn

strained her neck to gaze up at the painted ceiling where resplendent gods fashioned the Earth from a few simple principles. From a

precarious platform raised on a crane, an artist was amending the figure of Zeus so he held a model of a circle that fitted inside a square. Evelyn remembered something of its meaning from her own schooldays. ‘Some things survive,’ she said. ‘We put the fragments together like bits of broken pottery, and that way all this is remembered. And we keep turning up new finds. It’s like those

episodes of Dad’s Army they threw out which keep turning up at church fetes.’

The Doctor sighed. ‘You only recover a small proportion of

anything you throw away,’ said the Doctor. ‘So much will always be lost. Your species has had cities for ten thousand years, and you’ve

evidence for much less than half of it.'

Evelyn pouted, as she had when her ex won their arguments. She saw the scholars going about their work and the perfectly oiled system for supporting them, and she felt as bereft as if attending a funeral. All these men's efforts to collate and preserve the world's learning, and so little of it would do any good. She knew,

intellectually, that nothing could last forever. She just found it hard how easily and how inevitably it was lost.

'So,' she said.

'So,' said the Doctor. 'We're looking for anything to corroborate a sighting of a Dalek. We'll try the History section for wars and disasters, and then try some of the accounts of visitations and curses.'

'Always the jolly stuff with you, Doctor,' said a man in late

middle age and a toga.

The Doctor gazed at him for a moment. 'Why of course,' he said.

'Evelyn, allow me to introduce a very great friend. This is Phil.

He's from Istanbul.'

Aku had never liked gold. It reminded him of the men he had

conquered and it made him uncomfortable. The golden chairs and 109

beds were always deftly wrought, and cushioned with the best silks and materials, yet he preferred to curl up on freshly harvested reeds, as the lowest of his subjects did. But gold was how people showed their deference, and gold was all they could understand.

Thus, on Aku's last day as king of his people, he was forced

against his will to recline on a golden throne made especially for the occasion. It confirmed a lot of what he'd learnt about power over the years, he thought, shifting his old bones uncomfortably. Nobody could do everything they wanted to.

He turned to his champion, ever dependable and never ageing.

Alai had only to give the word and the champion would kill

everyone lying prostrate before them. He would do it. He would exterminate his own loyal worshippers just because he could.

That was why he had to retire. Aku had seen so many killed just by his giving the order that he would kill even the people he ruled.

'We are a happy people,' he said, and the crowd before him

cheered. 'We have won all the wars we need to and the land is

plentiful. There is no want within our borders. We are content.'

The musicians took this as their cue for his anthem to be sung. He swatted at them with his withered arm, trying to make them stop.

They thought he was conducting.

'Yes,' he said when the song and its encores fell silent. 'We are content. Content now to leave you. Content to join the ancestors whose names I do not even know.'

The crowd slowly understood him. 'I am an old man,' he said.

'And it is my time. Nothing can last forever.'

His priests and sages nodded at his wisdom, but even some of

them were showing tears. Aku knew the one question that his

people longed to ask, so he answered it.

'My champion will be entombed with me, to guard me in the next life.'

They couldn't help themselves. Women cried out, things were

thrown and a fight started, the temple falling into pandemonium.

Watching coolly from the throne, Aku thought how little different his people were to all the many others he had conquered. The

wretches whose screaming haunted his sleep. The dead whose gold he was sitting on.

Without his champion to protect them, his people knew they were no different from those they'd defeated. And their defeated enemies would soon know it too. He was leaving them to die. In effect, he had

killed them himself.

But this was not his decision. He could no more command the

champion than he could hold back his own steady decline.

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The familiar, ever-terrifying spray of fire rattled him from his thoughts. The Dalek had shot a spear out of the sky, where someone had thrown it at the king. Aku had long grown weary of

assassination attempts, but there was still only one response to be given.

'Exterminate,' he said gently. His champion moved gracefully

forward, rising into the air above the people's heads. It lingered as it aimed its own withered arm, enjoying the would-be killer's growing terror. And then it fired once, the blast hurling the dead man against the temple wall.

There was silence. They waited for the Dalek to speak, to

announce sentence on them all. In that moment they realised the horror of the word they had for years sung as their great anthem.

But the king's champion showed terrible mercy. It left other men to exterminate them.

And the priests said that there is one pyramid which is a

curse on all men and no one can explain its history. Anyone

who has attempted to carry out religious rites near to it has

died, with no mark, injury or sign of poison on them. There

is a legend of a sarcophagus that guards its master even in

death.

Herodotus, *Histories, Book II*, p. 101.

It took them four weeks to reach the Valley of the Kings, which would have been less of a hardship had Evelyn brought a change of clothes. She felt sure she must reek as badly as their camels.

To make matters worse, the Doctor didn't look any different.

There'd been a brawl in one of their hostels in which he'd torn his sleeve, but otherwise his ridiculous, 'authentic' Greek costume remained entirely immaculate. She had kept an eye out on the road for an oasis, just so she could shove him into it head first.

They knew they were getting close when the camels got difficult.

It was a good two hours' walk on foot before the Doctor realised his map was upside down, by which point they'd got magnificently

lost. They blundered about until they found a skinny Nile tributary and Evelyn fished for their tea while the Doctor gathered firewood.

She had been to maybe a hundred different worlds and never seen a night sky like that one. The Doctor told her the names of the stars and stories about those he had been to.

The next day they regained their bearings and had found the

cursed tomb by the evening.

The twilight grew bloody as they approached the hillside's

gaping wound. It didn't look much, she thought. No more

interesting than any other cave they'd seen. Yet she could feel something in the air, something chilling. She remembered how

being on the Dalek spaceship had made her hair stand on end, like being run all over with static. Exactly how she felt venturing into the cave.

They went slowly in the darkness. Evelyn could feel through her flip-flops how the steep ramp down had been cut. The thieves who had come before them must have used wide-edged, fat-bottomed

spades. She found her heart beating desperately. They had found a few fragments to lead them here, all written by a sole survivor who'd been instructed to warn everyone else. Whatever the

TARDIS did to allow Evelyn to read the different old languages retained their terrified tone.

‘I think we’re here,’ said the Doctor gently. More accustomed to the gloom, Evelyn could just make out that their crude tunnel came to an end where it met an arched corridor, distinctively low and wide. The Doctor had to stoop as they made their way down it.

‘I’d call this evidence,’ said Evelyn, indicating the frescos

running either side of them. Armies of stick figures crashed together in battle, or partied around distinct landmarks. And central to every frame of this cultural epic was an unmistakable silhouette.

‘It looks like there’s only one Dalek,’ said Evelyn.

‘One is more than enough. I still don’t know what we’re going to

–’ He stopped abruptly.

‘What?’

‘Look.’

To his right the fresco showed the stick men and their Dalek

parading round a bright yellow triangle. Also captured in the scene, down the road from the festivities, sprawled what looked like a lion with a man’s head, completely out of scale with the stick men.

Evelyn recognised the Sphinx.

‘It’s the Pyramid at Giza!’ she said.

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor. ‘Built for King Khufu more than 2,000

years ago. That’s when this Dalek arrived.’

‘You can’t be sure of that,’ she chided. ‘Where’s your evidence?’

‘I’ve a first-hand source,’ he said, pointing to the white-haired stick man standing in the doorway of a blue oblong. ‘I was there.

One of them got left behind.’

They kept on, emerging into a wide space that must once have

been incredible. The tapestries had long since faded and what

treasures had not been stolen had been roundly smashed. There was

no gold or silverware left anywhere, and nor was there sign of the Dalek. But they could tell it had been here: the place was strewn 112

with bones.

‘He’s cleared out,’ said the Doctor, ignoring the debris to stare up at a tiny maroon light set high in the pointed ceiling. Evelyn realised the distant pinprick must be the sky. ‘He was here a long time,’ the Doctor went on. ‘People must have got more

adventurous.’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Evelyn.

‘It wanted to be left in peace. And they haven’t yet invented the monastery.’

‘You mean it’s hiding?’ she laughed.

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor. ‘And I’ve an idea where.’

Above the glory of the city stood the glory of a man. He was

hundreds of metres tall and in the balled fist high above his head he held two tiny figures.

‘Hell of a view,’ said the Doctor.

‘Are you sure it’s safe?’ asked Evelyn, who still hadn’t got her breath back from the climb.

‘For the moment.’

‘He’s not here,’ she said. ‘I don’t think he’d cope with the

staircase.’

‘It’s not really wide enough for two people. It must be hell if you meet anyone coming the other way.’

‘It must be,’ he sighed.

‘Oh, well,’ she said. ‘It was a good guess.’

She joined him at the rail and looked out over Rhodes. A school textbook had shown the Colossos with its hands squarely on its hips, standing astride the harbour. They said it had been built to protect the

town, or to celebrate some military victory. In fact, as far as they could tell from those old enough to remember it being built, it had just been something for the children to play on.

'What made you think he'd be here?' she asked.

'The hole in the ceiling of that tomb,' he said.

'Oh, yes,' Evelyn clucked. 'I should have noticed that. And how does a hole tell you anything?'

The Doctor sighed. 'It wasn't just for ventilation. That was a pinhole, looking up at the heavens. Our Dalek was watching the stars.'

'He wants to get home, doesn't he?'

'Yes. But he was six thousand years before his own time. And

there are none of the resources here to help him. What would you do?'

'I'd probably go mad. We don't discover chocolate until the

1490s.'

'But if you were a Dalek?'

'Go on, tell me.'

'Well, what have we seen? He made some friends, fought in

wars, built himself an empire. Oh, I'm sure he enjoyed the killing, but what was any of it good for?'

'His grateful people could build him a telescope.'

'More or less. That tomb was still a tomb.'

'So what was he doing in it?'

'Waiting.'

Evelyn considered. 'How long do Dalek batteries last?'

He smiled thinly, that cat-like look about him. 'Go on.'

'He's stranded, he becomes king, but then he starts feeling a bit jaded.

Can Daleks use solar energy?'

'It's possible.'

'Well, let's say he can but he's still feeling his age,' she said.

'And there's still thousands of years before his own time, or even before Daleks come in range. What do you do when you're tired?'

'I get tetchy.'

'You do that anyway.'

'Evelyn.'

'He's conserving power. Check the skies every hundred years and otherwise turn off all systems.'

'That's probably why the TARDIS couldn't track him down,'

said the Doctor.

'If you say so. But what's the one thing we know about this

period? That little of anything lasts. They live in mud huts and sandcastles and they're always fighting wars, so where's a tired Dalek going to kip? The tomb was fine for a while, but when that's been disturbed a few times too often... The Dalek is using too much energy shooting down thieves.'

'It's more likely that every incursion was a larger group of

people, and the Dalek could see where that was leading. Very

logical, the Daleks.'

'Well, okay. So it's looking for some structure that's likely to last a long time.'

From his pocket the Doctor withdrew a small roll of papyrus.

'Phil wrote me a list. Places built to last.'

'So we check off each one, then?' She looked over the list. 'Do you really think a Dalek would hide in the beautiful gardens of Babylon?'

'It's the last thing we'd expect. Very sneaky, the Daleks.'

‘We know he was at the mausoleum,’ she said. ‘Why don’t we

head back there?’

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She knew it wasn’t the answer he wanted to hear. If they got it wrong again they’d have wasted another month. Travelling the old-fashioned way was fun for a while, but they were both getting fed up with it now. They wanted an elegant solution.

The Doctor drummed his fingers and stared out into the distance.

Then, as if he’d decided something, he lunged forward over the railing, so fast she thought he was jumping. She grabbed hold of him tight, but he was merely leaning out to get a better look at the Colossos beneath them.

He righted himself, then slapped a hand to his head. Too late –

they both looked back over the railing again and could just see the dim black speck of his pom-pommed hat as it floated past the

giant’s bronze kneecaps.

‘Bother,’ he said. But she knew that look in his eyes.

‘You’re having one of your ideas,’ she said. ‘Is it going to be a good one?’

‘Oh, yes,’ he said. ‘We just need to turn the tables.’

According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who was an

historian of great reputation writing in about 27 BC., in 224

BC an iron box (see Strabo, Book 14, *The God of the Sun*, 2.05.) left the Mausoleum and was taken across the sea,

leaving the Greeks in Halicarnassus ‘in amazement.’ (Could

this amazement mean it was taken by pirates – or some other,

unnatural, means?)

Müller *Fragmenta Historicum Graecorum*

(Paris, 1841), volume i, p. 300.

The tiny bulb came off a keyring of Evelyn's, the battery long since spent. The Doctor made a new one using local coins and vinegar while she watched him and ate all the dolmades. It got late and he said he would stay up to finish it. Really, he'd been ready for hours and just wanted her safely in bed before he ventured out on his own.

Being up on the Colossos in the middle of the night like this was definitely no place for Evelyn. It wasn't exactly for him, either.

'Doctor,' said the Dalek floating perfectly still just beyond the railing in front of him, and lit only by the eerie green light from the torch that was centuries ahead of its time. From this vantage point, the narrow beam it made had stretched right across the sea.

'Good evening,' said the Doctor. 'Thanks for popping over.'

The Dalek eyed him carefully. 'You were looking for me?'

'Yes I was. At first I thought you were out to change history.

Help Egypt build its pyramids and then give them nuclear bombs.

But that's not been your game at all, has it?'

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'History can only be changed on the orders of the Emperor

Dalek.'

'So you've been building little foxholes and waiting for the call.'

'I await orders.'

'Yes. And you're never going to get them. Are you?'

The Dalek seemed to hesitate. 'No.'

'There's still two thousand years before your ships are anywhere near here. And even running on minimal you won't survive that

long. Will you?'

'This unit was damaged in a battle. Energy levels depleted.'

‘Someone got lucky with a javelin, did they? I’m sure you didn’t let them enjoy it.’

‘Many of the indigenous population have been exterminated.’

The Doctor’s eyes were steely. ‘How many?’

‘Nineteen thousand, six hundred and twenty nine.’

‘And there was me thinking you wanted to keep a low profile.’

‘The number is not significant. For a Dalek.’

‘No, I suppose not. But it is significant. It makes it easier for me.

I’m sorry, but I can’t let you live.’

‘I will not live,’ said the Dalek sadly. ‘I have used up my reserves by coming here. But one order still stands.’

‘Let me guess...’ He was silenced by the hideous scream.

‘Exterminate the Doctor!’

The Dalek’s gun exploded blue fire but the Doctor was already

hurtling down the stairs. The Dalek tried to follow but could not fit into the stairwell. It loosed off more bolts of electric death, then backed away from the statue to reconsider.

The Doctor tore on, taking several steps at a time. The Dalek

splintered the plasterwork down on top of him, and he fought the desperation to sneeze.

‘Exterminate!’ cried the Dalek from somewhere outside, and the Doctor’s instincts threw him forward. He tumbled down the stairs, gashing his arms and body against the steps and the walls and the ceiling. And so narrowly escaped being in the upper length of arm that the Dalek had just severed from the rest of the Colossos.

He kept running, the torn-off arm crashing to the ground like an explosion. The Dalek fired again but by now he was through the shoulder and into the giant’s main body. He leapt for the ladder that ran parallel to the spine and quickly slid down into the pelvis. The designated exit was down through the left leg.

There was a tremendous crash above him and he looked up to see the night sky. The Colossos had just been decapitated. The Dalek appeared over the torn neckline, and then floated down through the 116

ribcage towards him.

‘There’s really no need for all this vandalism,’ chided the Doctor, struggling to open the trapdoor.

‘Exterminate,’ said the Dalek, loosing another couple of volleys.

The trapdoor snapped open and the Doctor dodged back to let the two deadly blue shots race down his escape route ahead of him. An instant later they exploded into the ground. The Colossos lurched sickeningly, the spinal ladder coming loose and whipping hard

against the Dalek. The Doctor leapt out the way as the Dalek

crashed down onto where he’d been standing, entirely blocking his way out. The impact tore off one of the Dalek’s dome lights, the gash sparking and fizzing in the darkness.

‘That must sting,’ said the Doctor, now busy on the trapdoor that led into the other leg. He looked up in time to see Dalek levelling its gun, spun himself round and the trapdoor took the full brunt.

‘Thanks,’ said the Doctor.

‘Exte...’ said the Dalek weakly.

‘That’s the spirit,’ said the Doctor. ‘You give me everything

you’ve got!’

The Dalek did not fire, so he dared to clamber through the jagged opening and into the right leg. It was another ladder, but the legs were bolted differently so he couldn’t slide down. He would just have to climb down it properly.

It’s safer this way,’ he said, beginning his descent. The Colossos lurched drunkenly around him. If the Dalek had shot away half its moorings, the thing wouldn’t hold up for long. He hurried ever downwards, one step at a time, and as he passed through the right knee he dared to look up.

The Dalek now glared down at him through the ragged hole of

the trapdoor. It aimed its gunstick, and there was nowhere for him to hide. He let go of the ladder and, free falling, saw the shot tear right through the kneecap.

The Doctor reached out his hands and the ladder tried to wrench out his shoulder. He screamed, having fallen maybe twenty metres.

The Dalek swivelled its gunstick around again, sizing up for another shot. The Doctor's whole body was livid with pain, but he snuggled on down the last remaining steps. Above him, the Dalek locked

target. With another great lurch all around him, the Doctor dropped the last ten or so steps. He could have avoided the blast had he not snagged his foot as he landed. Floundering, he fell on his backside and gazed up into the Dalek's gun.

'Exte...' said the Dalek, the light in its eyeball a pinprick of white. Its gun spat blue death at him. The Doctor kept his eyes open 117

and wished he'd thought of something to say. What an inelegant way to pass on!

The death ray smashed into his body.

It took a heartsbeat to realise the shot hadn't killed him. It hurt, yes, all through his nervous system, and it probably would do for weeks. But he had survived being shot by a Dalek.

He looked up at the pinprick of an eye far up above him, and

witnessed the dying of the light. The Dalek had used up its last, under-powered breath on him.

Again the Colossos lurched, leaning further this time and over-reaching. The Doctor struggled to his feet, pain crawling through every inch of his body. The door refused to yield, and he bashed and hammered frantically while the structure of the giant groaned around him. He fumbled in his pockets for anything that might help but could only produce an old apple. In frustration he bowled the thing at the door and the door responded and opened inwards at him. Laughing with shock and relief, the Doctor flung himself out into the night air, and ran for his life as the Colossos of Rhodes fell asunder.

There was a terrible silence ringing in his ears.

And then he realised it wasn't ringing but the applause of the local

townspeople. From the ground where he'd thrown himself, he watched in mild amusement as Evelyn calmly explained how it was nothing and that they shouldn't mention it.

'The nightwatchmen saw the Dalek coming over the sea and

sounded the alarm,' she told him as she helped him to his feet.

'People have heard of its power from the legends. They thought their time had come.' She smiled. 'And they also realise that the creature mistook their Colossos for some real giant, and attacked it instead of them.'

'So the Colossos has saved their town and killed a great enemy,'

said the Doctor, exhausted. 'Well done him.'

'Yes,' said Evelyn, tucking her arm into his and giving it a

squeeze.

'Well, that seems to be that,' said the Doctor, dusting down the ruin of his Greek costume. 'But before we find somewhere serving dolmades for breakfast, we should make sure history stays as it's written. I just need a quick word with the locals...'

In accordance with a certain Oracle the people did not raise

[the Colossos] again.

Strabo, *Geography*, 14.2.5

'Mr Paxton's famous greenhouse...' said Charles Newton. 'The new 118

Palace of Westminster... The SS Great Britain... Perhaps even the Great Western Railway... That's four.'

'The Clifton Suspension Bridge?' Evelyn suggested.

'When they finish it,' said the Doctor. 'Then there's the

Eddystone Lighthouse, a triumphant feat of engineering against the odds.'

'The bridge over the Menai Straits?' put in Newton. He was a

few years younger and a great deal less experienced, but he still had

that fire in his eyes.

‘That’s a good one,’ said the Doctor, ‘But perhaps we could think of something that wasn’t in the UK. We’re supposed to be thinking of the whole world.’

‘Like Philos of Byzantium?’ asked Evelyn.

Newton laughed. ‘We’ve travelled further these days than the

Greeks could have dreamed,’ he said. ‘It was the world as far as they knew it.’

‘In the Hellenistic period?’ asked the Doctor. ‘Alexander had

reached out beyond India...'

'And did they have marvels like the pyramids out there?'

'Have you been to look?'

'Boys, please,' said Evelyn. 'You're spoiling the historic

occasion.'

'I merely meant –' Newton started. Then he made himself stop,

and said, 'How about some kind of toast?'

'Yes,' said the Doctor, reaching for his wine. 'To the discovery of a wonder of the world.'

They clinked their glasses and drank. Evelyn caught the Doctor's eye and he smirked and looked quickly away.

'So you're sure the Colossos stood in the harbour?' she asked

Newton. They had a table overlooking the water, a good view of the marker poles Newton had spent all day planting.

'It has to have! We've found what can only be its great

foundations. And anyway, where else would they put it?'

'Well,' said Evelyn. 'How about up there on the hill? Nice view from up there, I'd expect.'

Newton attempted to take her idea seriously. 'It's a possibility,'

he said. In the manner, thought Evelyn, that she would once have responded to entreaties about alien abductions.

'I'm sure Mr Newton's right,' chided the Doctor. 'And it's

corroborated by all the sources.'

'Only those written centuries after it was standing,' admitted Newton.

'But that's all we've got,' said Evelyn firmly. 'So that's what we 119

have to make do with.'

They sat in silence for a moment, not watching the water and the history marked out as lying within it, but the people of the town as they went about their evening. There were evening meals going on, at which babies wailed, mothers harried their grown-up children, and the menfolk told terrible jokes. As it had always been, as it would always be.

And best of all for Evelyn, none of them gave a stuff about

history.

The Record of the Human Past is not all contained in printed

books. Man's history has been graven on the rocks of Egypt,

stamped on the brick of Assyria, enshrined in the marble of

the Parthenon. It rises before us an amorphic presence in the

piled up arches of the Coliseum. It lurks, an unsuspected

treasure amid the oblivious dust of archives and monasteries

– it is enshrined in all the heirlooms of religions, of races, of families.

Charles Newton, *On the Study of Archaeology*,

lecture given at Oxford University, 1850s.

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Mutually Assured Survival

Justin Richards

I've thought a thousand times about how I might die, but I never once imagined it would be with you.

Alone, perhaps. In a small room with no air, maybe. Out in space with no hope of rescue, possibly. Blasted down by a Dalek, very probably. But like this, and with you? Never.

Georgi knew he was sending me to my death. Though he expected it to be sooner than this. Well, so did I. Summoned to see the great Georgi Selestru – that was almost a death sentence in itself in those days. I wouldn't have missed it for anything, though – because it meant I had a chance. A chance to fight back, to make a difference. It was only a week after Leon's ship

was reported missing just outside the Hernestoral Buffer Zone. And we all knew what that meant.

It meant the Daleks had him. Either they'd taken him prisoner along with the rest of the crew and passengers, or he was dead. I cried all night, prayed too. Prayed that he was dead. Can you believe that? Being summoned to Selestru was as close to an answer to those prayers as I was ever going to get.

A lot can change in two years. I don't just mean to a person. I've changed, probably out of all recognition. But the whole situation has changed. Selestru knew it would happen – Georgi was always so much cleverer than the people he had to work for. So much cleverer than the people who worked for him. He blew what would happen.

You want to find someone who understands the human condition, then it's Georgi Selestru. He didn't waste time on sympathy. God knows, he'd lost more than I ever had to begin with. But he was sad for me –

for us all. I could see it in his eyes as he shook my hand and asked me to sit down.

Or maybe he was sad for me. Someone else who should have had their whole life ahead of them, another young woman he was sending to her death. But at least he told me why I was going to die. Not like the others.

Not like now.

* * *

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The office was like its owner – plain, unremarkable, but a little old-fashioned. There was even a shelf of books. Sasha Vredenburg took it in at a glance. Her attention was fixed on the sad, pale eyes of Georgi Selestru as he motioned for her to sit down.

'I am sorry to have to call you here,' he said. His voice was deep and rich but edged with fatigue and sadness.

'I volunteered,' Sasha said. 'I asked to join Galactic Union

Security.'

'So you did,' Selestru admitted. He tapped fingers on the top of his desk, as if considering. Then he sighed, the decision made. 'I'd like

you to go to Astronomar. You won't have heard of it. It's one of the Frontier Worlds. Completely ordinary, very boring.'

Sasha nodded. 'And what do you want me to do there?'

'Do? Nothing. Well, live your life. Be completely normal and

ordinary. Attract no attention and make no waves. Get a job, settle down.'

'Enjoy myself?' she joked, wondering what was coming next.

'If you like. But don't make too many friends, and live every day as if it might be your last.'

She thought about that. 'And might it?'

Selestru stood up and came round his desk to stand next to her.

Behind the desk, the wall of the office shimmered and became a star chart. Selestru was holding a remote, and the chart zoomed in on one particular solar system.

'That's where you'll be going. If you accept the assignment.'

'I accept,' she said automatically, without thinking. Or rather, thinking of Leon.

'Wait until you've heard me out before you decide for certain.'

He turned back to the screen. 'It was hard enough in the borders before the plague. And after we found that the plague was just a cover for the Daleks... Well, you can imagine.' He hesitated, and wiped his eyes. 'Well, you probably can't. Any more than I can, or any of the Galactic Council.'

'But we're not at war,' Sasha pointed out 'Not officially. Just skirmishes. They destroy a ship here...' She bit her lip, fighting back the tears that threatened to well up in her eyes. 'We liberate a border world there. Since Bosarno Major and the establishment of the

Buffer Zones it's stalemate.'

Selestru flicked a control on the remote and the image pulled out again. 'Not quite,' he said. 'Yes, they destroy or capture a ship here, but we don't liberate a border world there. We *never* liberate a border world. In the year since Bosarno the Daleks have taken 17 of the

Frontier Worlds in that sector alone.' A pale wash flowed over 122

one side of the chart. 'That shows the area the Daleks have taken in the past year. Seventeen inhabited worlds to provide slave labour, and many more that they can exploit for minerals using that slave labour. And we have so far liberated...' He turned to face her, waiting until her eyes met his before he told her: 'None.'

'None?'

He nodded. 'Not a single one.'

She shrugged, surprised and scared by the admission but trying not to show it. 'We're doing better in some sectors than others.

Maybe the Central Forces are concentrating on other regions.'

'I'm sorry, I don't think I can be explaining this very well.' He tapped the small remote against his chin. 'When I said none, I meant none. We have liberated no border worlds, no worlds of any kind, in any sector. Anywhere. Ever.'

She actually laughed at that. How could he be so naive? 'But the newscasts, just yesterday they said –'

'I know what they said,' he snapped. 'I get to approve the text, may God forgive me. But no matter what the newscasts say, we *are* at war. And we are losing.'

'Then, why not tell the people. If it's resources we need...'

Selestru was shaking his head. 'When we uncovered the Dalek

plot, when we found out the truth about the plague, about the

Daleks themselves, my department was hailed as the great hope.

They poured in money and resources. That and the increased

military presence in the Border Regions meant we were able to hold them back. But it costs. It all costs, and governments don't like spending on things the electorate can't see.'

'What?' Sasha couldn't believe she was understanding him

correctly. 'We're losing and they're cutting back?'

‘You could argue that we’re losing because they’re cutting back.

I tried, at any rate. Though I think really, between you and me, we’d lose eventually never mind how much they spent. People don’t care, you see.’

‘How can you say that?’

Selestru gave a short laugh, but there was no mirth in it. ‘How can you believe otherwise? The people who are in charge are

content to ignore the Daleks and pretend they just don’t exist. Or at least that they are no threat. Isn’t that what they tell you? Life goes on. Except in the worlds close to – or in – the Buffer Zones. Yes, the Daleks are advancing. But they’re still light years away. They’re not really a threat – not to us here. And who cares if a few colonists live in fear, or die in fire, provided the Central Union Area is safe and protected.’

He leaned down, staring her in the face. ‘What would you rather we spent your taxes on – protecting some tiny unsustainable world so far away you’ve never even heard of it? Or healthcare for the sick and education for the children? Which one will win the votes at the next election, do you think?’

‘But…’ She did her best to meet his gaze, wondering how she

would have answered just a week ago, before Leon… ‘We have to do something.’

Selestru straightened up. ‘Oh, I agree. You and I know that this stand-, off, such as it is, can’t last. Every day there are skirmishes, every week another Border World falls to the Daleks. Slowly but surely, the Dalek advance continues and the Buffer Zone shrinks or moves. And all the time, the Daleks are gathering their strength ready for the next major assault. But the Galactic Union won’t listen

– heads in the sand, those who govern are content to ride out the peace, to make the most of the breather.’

‘How long can it last?’

‘You tell me.’ He was working the remote again. ‘And I mean

that. This is Astronomar, here look – right in the way of the Dalek advance. I'd expect it to fall to the Daleks in the next month. And when it does, I want you there. I want you to be an ordinary citizen, completely normal. And I want to know everything that happens.

The Dalek tactics, how the invasion is achieved. What happens to the people there. How – *if* – we can fight back.'

Sasha nodded. It made sense. 'You'll give me some way of

getting data out.'

'Of course.'

She shook her head. 'I can't understand why you haven't done

this before. Why haven't you put agents into planets about to be occupied already? It seems an obv...' She stopped. Mouth hanging open.

Selestru nodded sadly. 'Those 17 border planets. And a dozen

others. I had agents on them all. I've lost so many I'm almost out of finding. Almost out of agents. Reduced to –'

'Reduced to using untrained, ordinary people like me?' she

finished for him.

'Yes,' he admitted. 'I'm afraid so. But that might be your

advantage. All the others, they were trained to be different, trained to fight back, to sabotage the Dalek operations, organise resistance groups. Maybe they're doing that. But I have to say I see no sign of it. And I have to say I've had no reports back from any of them in the last six months.' He returned to his chair and sat facing her across the desk. 'You may be able to stay undetected. Just by being 124

yourself, by being ordinary.'

'I'm not ordinary,' Sasha said quietly. 'Not any more. Not now I know the truth. Not now I've lost someone.'

'Whether we know it or not,' Selestru told her quietly, 'we've all lost someone.' He stood up again, reaching across the desk to shake her hand. 'You'll get a proper operational briefing of course. But I wanted to see you myself first. Make sure you know what you're getting into.

Not that any of us really know what it's like out there.'

'Thank you.' Sasha stood up too, aware that the meeting was

over. 'Just lie low, don't draw attention. Tell us what you can, but take no risks. Above all, don't even think about fighting back, about trying to hurt the Daleks. All right?'

'All right,' she lied. On the screen behind him, she saw not the star chart and planetary systems. She saw Leon's ship, burning and breaking up as the Daleks swarmed round it.

Two years I survived on Astronomar. Like Georgi said, it helped to be ordinary and I was lucky to avoid being shipped off for labour duties. But I didn't lie low as he'd told me. I doubt he ever thought I would. Not really. I organised resistance groups, sabotaged communications and military installations. Even blew up a few Daleks. I admit that. I enjoyed that.

But it was tough. Not so much the danger and the sabotage. That was good, it was a way of fighting back. What was worst was the everyday life. The grey drudgery of living under the Daleks. Didn't matter how ordinary you were, they might come for you at any time.

Might take you off to mine mineral ores on a slave world, or work in the armaments factories, or just shoot you down as an example to others. Everyone had to live with that. Everyone. Not just me. That was the worst – seeing everyone else suffer. I knew why I was there, and I'd made a choice. I wanted to be there. But I was the only living person on Astronomar who did.

But when I got the message that Georgi's people were coming to extract me, to take me away... I was elated. And you know what, I was ashamed too. It was like I was running away. And I couldn't wait to be leaving.

Galactic Security sent a covert spinner, masked with the latest anti-detection equipment and shielding, it drifted under the Dalek

surveillance web on silent running. A tiny two-man ship, barely larger than a coffin. It made planet-fall in a clearing in the woods outside Malfan, the largest city of Astronomar. Or what was left of it.

Sasha Vredenburg was late, and the pilot was getting itchy. He 125

was on the point of abandoning her and taking off again when she came running through the trees. She was shouting, waving, urging him to power up the engines. He didn't need telling. He could hear the

Dalek blasters. He could see the creeping fire and the explosions following her through the trees.

She dived through the open hatch, and the ship was moving

before it had closed again.

‘Close call,’ the pilot said as the spinner rocketed skywards.

‘I got careless,’ she said. From her tone that was all she would tell him, and the pilot knew better than to ask.

‘Enjoy the flight,’ he said. Then he concentrated on weaving

through the barrage of fire thrown out by the kill-sats. They didn’t know where the spinner was, couldn’t see it. They were working to a computer prediction of what the pilot would do. Blasting the empty space along his most likely escape route.

The pilot wasn’t predictable. He’d survived by being rash and

impetuous, always on the brink of foolhardy but never quite tipping over. He banked and accelerated in a seemingly random manner,

concentrating so hard he didn’t notice that Sasha was already asleep in the seat beside him. Even when her head slumped sideways and rested on his shoulder, he paid it no attention.

His teeth were bared and his eyes wide. He might have been

terrified. Or he might have been smiling.

I don’t know how long I slept. Maybe days. I missed the jump to light speed and only woke when we emerged into normal space again. You know how your stomach seems to drop away when you…

No, you probably don’t. Never mind. But I could tell we weren’t anywhere near where I thought we were going. I told the pilot – I never knew his name, I never asked – I told him:

‘This isn’t right. This isn’t System so. Where are you taking me?’

Even drew a gun on him. I’m trusted no one for so long. Even your friends can be implanted. Micro-robotisation. You can never tell, not for sure. And when I saw where the pilot was taking me, I freaked.

The station had been patched up so many times that there was little

left of the original structure. It was a mish-mash of technologies welded together, turning lazily in the black emptiness. But Sasha could see enough of it to know that the basic design, the original station, had been built to a Dalek design.

And, as if to make the point, a Dalek saucer was moored to the station, turning with it. The narrow flexi-corridor linking saucer to station was a tenuous strand, translucent and impossibly flimsy. The

saucer was scarred and damaged. One whole section had been

ripped away exposing the structure within.

She pushed the gun against the pilot's head, and he laughed.

Actually laughed.

'Where did you think we were going?' he said. 'Planet 11?'

'Yes. I thought you were from Selestru.'

'I am.'

She pushed the gun harder against his head. The pilot sighed, and tapped a sequence into the main console.

'I'll kill you,' she warned him.

'No you won't. Watch.'

The main screen flickered and changed. The view of the station and the saucer disappeared to be replaced by a freeze-framed face.

Georgi Selestru. He looked older and even more tired.

'A recording,' the pilot told her. 'He said you'd get a bit jumpy when you saw the Station.'

'I want to talk to him. Really talk to him.'

'Too far out for that. It took us over a month to get here, and that's in a spinner.'

She just stared at him. 'A month?'

'The cabin is a cryo-chamber. You were asleep already so you

probably didn't notice. You were asleep when we came out of

cryo.' He pointed at the screen. 'Want to hear what he has to tell you now?'

'Okay.' Her voice was flat and dull and emotionless. After all this time, all she got was a recording?

'Want to put the gun away now?'

'Sasha, I can't tell you how sorry I am not to be able to speak to you in person. This recording is a rather poor substitute. But I think I owe it to you to be the one to tell you what's happening. Where I'm sending you, and why. You've done so well, and I am so very proud of you. I'd like to bring you home. But I still need your help.

Last year, you sent a cryptomail saying that the Daleks got

everyone out of their homes and into huge shelters. You never knew why. But we did. We'd been monitoring a star in the Temclan

sector, very close to Astronomar's sun. Its background radiation was so high it swamped everything in the sector. All the classic symptoms of a neutron strike. Very nasty. I was about to send a spinner to get you out.

Sasha paused the recording. 'Neutron strike?'

'Star collapse,' the pilot said. 'usually takes centuries – millennia even – for a star to collapse. Neutron strike is when it happens, 127

like...' He clapped his hands together. 'Like that. In a day. Hours.

No one knows why. Only been seen recently. I guess it happens so fast – blink and you'd miss it.'

'Bad?'

'Very. Light years of surrounding space gets devastated. Other suns gets disrupted. Orbits change. Planets collide or their orbits decay. If it's a full star collapse, then there's a black hole. Yes, it's bad.'

She nodded, and let the recording run on.

But then it stopped. The star stabilised. For no apparent reason. Our best guess, and it is only a guess, is that the Daleks did something.

They put you all in shelters maybe because they didn't want anyone to know what they did. Or perhaps because it involved some

process that would have killed or injured you. Not that they're that bothered about saving your lives. But it would be wasteful to lose so many potential slaves needlessly...

And what does this have to do with you, now? Well, there's a star very close to you that's been exhibiting the same symptoms as

Temclan Delta before it started to collapse. Exactly the same

radiation signature. We think that this star is also about to collapse.

If it does it'll destroy the colony world Manikis and kill millions.

More important, though it sticks in my throat to say it, the collapse will destroy the space station you are now approaching. Station Seven. And we can't let that happen.

There's no way we can arrange a rescue or an evacuation. No

way we can move the Station. For one thing, it isn't supposed to exist. Because Station Seven is Galactic Union Security's most secret establishment. It's our last great hope for victory. Or at least survival. If my superiors knew it existed, they'd close it down...

Why? Because what we keep here would terrify them.

Sometimes, it terrifies me.

He told me, of course, but it doesn't really prepare you. And I was let into it gently. Georgi didn't tell me everything. He left that to Karlton.

I suppose I should have wondered why a Psi-Ops man would be in charge of a space station full of alien technology. But I didn't. Not then.

I was just amazed by it all. Damaged, wrecked, useless most of it.

All the captured and recovered Dalek technology that Security could get their hands on. All gathered in this one secret space station salvaged from a Dalek Orbit Base that got burned out at Bosarno. We were so far out in the orbit over Manikis that you could barely see the planet. They had no idea we were here. No idea that if the orbit 128

engines gave up, the whole station would come crashing down on them. A shooting star as it burned up on entering their atmosphere.

They'd never know a thing.

Even though I'd seen so much Dalek tech close up and personal, I was amazed and impressed. I've been chased by a squadron of Daleks on transolar discs, but I was still in awe of the blackened burnt-out husk of one that Karlton showed me on Station Seven.

Assessment and reverse engineering,' he said when I asked why.

'We take the technology apart and examine it. One day, we'll know how it works. It will give up its secrets and we'll be able to use it, duplicate it. Exploit the weaknesses and use the strengths. Fight back.'

There was a gleam in his eyes as he said it. More than just fanaticism. It was deeper than that. It was hope.

Karlton took me through the whole station. Or so I thought. He showed me the test labs where the science unit was trying to get a Dalek blaster to work. It looked in perfect condition, but even then I didn't guess. He took me past the cells where quislings and collaborators were brought to be questioned if Security thought they had any technological data. There was a large metal cage full of Ogrons captured on the edge of the Henderson Rim. A Roboman, standing silent and still in an empty containment lab.

'We had another, last year,' Karlton told me as we walked past.

'Just the same. Starved to death in the end.' He sighed, but it was frustration rather than sympathy. 'We had no way to tell him to eat or drink. Couldn't get any orders to him at all. Shame. We're hoping to find an override frequency.'

He led me without comment into a glass corridor. Either side of us there seemed to be a jungle – strange trees moving gently in an impossible breeze. A glimpse of pale, cloudy vegetation.

'Varga plants,' Karlton said, as if that explained everything.

'There's a Slyther in there somewhere too. For all the good it's done us. Oh, don't worry, it's only a small one.'

Then we were out of the corridor, and back into the main section, heading back to his office.

'What about the Dalek saucer?' I asked. 'It looked pretty damaged.

Is that for technology research too?'

‘Yes,’ Karlton said. He sounded wary. ‘But not just that.’

‘Then, what?’

He stopped, turned, looked at me. Like he was deciding if I needed to know. ‘It’s where we keep the prisoners of war,’ he said.

‘It’s instructive to watch them. We record everything.’

‘And you just let them move about freely in there? Do what they 129

like?’ Sasha asked.

She stared in horrified fascination at the wall of screens. Each showed a different area inside the wrecked saucer. And the Daleks moving within it.

‘We did have sound,’ one of the technicians told her. ‘But they somehow manage to screen that out.’ He pressed a button on the main console and the room was filled with a screech of white noise.

The technician smiled an apology and shut it off. ‘Happened when we put one of the patients in there. Thought that might mix things up a little.’

‘Patients?’

Raritan took her elbow and led her away from the technician.

‘Later,’ he said. ‘They don’t seem to be able to knock out the video feeds.’

‘Or they want you to see what they’re doing.’

‘Possibly.’ He didn’t sound surprised at the suggestion, so he’d probably already considered it. ‘And in answer to your earlier question, yes – we let them move freely. Within the confines of the saucer. You can see that a lot of the equipment has been removed.

What you can’t see is that we’ve disconnected the power to their weapons systems so their guns won’t work. In fact, all the power cells have been stripped out of the ship. They can’t operate anything in there. None of it works. But it’s useful watching them try. We get to see how they think they can repair it. Or we did. They know now that they can’t.’

The technician had joined them. ‘It’s a sealed environment,’ he said.

‘Radiation levels in there are not healthy for you and me, not without a rad-suit. Just how the Daleks like it though.’

Sasha was barely listening. She watched the Daleks on the

screens –always moving, twitching, circling, gliding. Even trapped in their saucer they looked dangerous and brutal. ‘You sure they can’t get out?’

‘Any trouble, we can close off the static electrical supply to the floor. They probably have some power stored up, but not enough for long. Not enough to fire a weapon or move at speed. Long-term that’d sort them out.’

‘Worst case scenario,’ Karlton said, ‘and believe me we have

played through every possible scenario, but worst case we detach the saucer.’

‘Let them drift?’

‘Break the umbilical and disconnect the gray-clamps. It might

look a long way, but it’d hit the atmosphere of Minikis in less than five hours. Burn up. Explode. Job done.’

She watched the screens. She imagined the Daleks talking,

planning, plotting. Remembered her grey, inhuman life on

Astronomar and the people she had left there.

‘Why don’t you do it now?’ she said.

I argued. I told them how dangerous it was – what I’d seen on Astronomar. They didn’t know the half of it, could never even guess. I pleaded with them to cut the saucer loose and let it fall into destruction. I shouted at Karlton until I was hoarse that it would never be safe, could never be worth the risk.

He just laughed. So confident. So wrong.

I said that even if I wanted to, I couldn’t persuade the Daleks to help. They’d never provide the technology to stop the neutron strike –

why should they? They'd rather be dead than help us. Would willingly sacrifice themselves to see Station Seven destroyed. My experience wouldn't help me negotiate with the Daleks. You can't negotiate with Daleks, can you?

That was when he told me.

'We don't expect you to negotiate with them,' he said. 'That's not why you're here. That's not why Georgi sent you to us.'

'Then why?' I asked.

'To talk to the patients. One patient in particular. Georgia thinks you might be able to get through to him, persuade him to help.'

'Patients?' The technician had mentioned patients. 'What patients?

There are people here who are sick?'

'Were sick. Now... Well, you'd better see for yourself.'

He took me to the hospital area. Another sealed, secure, sterile area. I climbed into a rad-suit and never even wondered why. My mind was on other things. On other possibilities. On what Karlton had just told me:

'We have five patients. That's what we call them. They were rescued almost two years ago. The only survivors of a skirmish with a Dalek medical transport that suffered engine failure just inside the Hernestoral Buffer Zone. Georgi said you know one of them. Maybe he'll remember you.'

'I'm sorry. I am so sorry.'

There were five of them in the room. None of them moved. Sasha Vredenburg walked slowly between them. Her face was pale, her

expression bleached out by shock and horror. The one nearest the door, Karlton had told her. That was the one.

Leon.

Sasha stopped in front of the Dalek. The Dalek that had once

been human. 'I...' She breathed in deeply to suppress the sob that 131

threatened to escape. 'I know what happened. The plague. The

treatment. This...'

The eyestalk lifted slightly, glowed faintly. He watched her.

Leon.

'Karlton has told me,' she said. 'He told me you won't help. You can operate the Dalek technology they have here. You can show us how to work it. You can help. He said you are allowed access to anything. He said you have been to the labs, to the test rooms. Even spent time in the saucer with the other – with the...' She swallowed.

'You've looked and even...' She was going to say 'touched' but she bit it back. Not good. Not going well. 'Why won't you help?'

No answer.

'Why won't you help me?'

The other Daleks were stirring now. A dome swivelled slowly

and another eyestalk lifted. A casing turned lazily about its axis.

'Listen,' Sasha told them, 'there's a problem. A star about to go neutron.' Was it her imagination or did that provoke more interest?

'We can't evacuate, we can't get away. Millions will die on

Minikis, as well as us. But we know the Daleks have the technology to stop it, to prevent the neutron strike.'

Still nothing. Just the background heartbeat throb of the Daleks'

life support systems.

'Why won't you help us?' she yelled. Frustrated, angry, so very sad. 'What do you want from us? Leon – what do you want?'

The Dalek closest to the door moved slightly. The eye swung up until it was staring right at Sasha. At last. She felt a moment's hope, a moment's elation.

Until it spoke.

Leon's voice was a grating, metallic monotone: 'We want to die.'

Death, or orders. That was all that was left for them. That was all they wanted. They were no longer human, so why should they help us? But separated from the Dalek command network they had no orders. They

weren't Daleks either.

The others, the real Daleks, you know they could cope. So much hate for so long means you can survive anything. Even loneliness. But these new Daleks simply weren't used to it. They'd only just started to hate. And they hated us – hated me. Because I was still human.

I should have guessed then.

The Dalek's eyestalk almost filled the monitor screen. Sasha could see the iris dilate slightly as it considered. Then sudden movement.

The Dalek backed away. 'We will confer.' It swung round to join several other Daleks. The white noise blasted out of the speakers 132

again.

'I don't know how they do it, but they can obviously turn it on and off when they want,' the technician said.

'I'm surprised they listened to you at all,' Karlton said.

'So am I,' Sasha admitted.

'You think they'll help?'

'More chance of persuading them than Leon.' She didn't look at him, but continued to watch the screen. The Daleks shivering and trembling as they debated. Dome lights flashing as they spoke

unheard words that could save – or condemn – millions. Including themselves. Including Sasha and Karlton and all of the crew of Station Seven. Including Leon, who wanted to die.

The lead Dalek swung back towards the camera. The technician

turned up the volume as the background noise faded to heartbeat.

'We have no wish to die,' the Dalek said.

'You'll help?' She was surprised. 'You'll stop the neutron

strike?'

'We may not be able to prevent neutron collapse. We must assess the precise nature of the phenomenon and calculate a counter-measure.'

‘But it is possible,’ Karlton insisted. ‘You can do it?’

‘Perhaps. We will need power for our instruments.’

‘You can’t leave the saucer,’ Sasha said. She looked at Karlton, hoping he would realise she was right ‘No armaments. Only the

most basic power to your systems.’

A slight hesitation. Then: ‘Agreed. We will assess the state of the subject star. Then we will discuss terms.’

‘Terms?’ Karlton leaned forward. ‘The only terms are that –’ But his voice was drowned out by the shriek from the speakers.

‘Do we do it?’ the technician asked as he turned off the sound. He looked pale and afraid.

‘Do it,’ Sasha said.

I think I knew. Maybe I thought it was the lesser of two evils. So what if a dozen or so Daleks got their power back? So what if we died? If it saved the million people on Minikis then maybe –just maybe – it was worth it.

And there was always the chance that this was for real, that the Daleks were helping. If they weren’t, they’d die anyway in the neutron strike. Unless they could stop it. So we all wanted to believe they were helping. Especially Karlton. He gave them more power when they needed it, he listened to their diagnosis – checked the readings, watching on his monitors as the Daleks traced the beam. The beam of ion-charged particles that was being blasted into 133

the star. The beam that was turning it neutron. The beam that was a weapon. A weapon I now realised the Daleks had tested – along

with their defence against similar technology – when I was on

Astronomar.

‘Dalek technology is capable of triggering a neutron strike,’ the lead Dalek admitted on the monitor. ‘Research has advanced since we were captured. We cannot counter the beam.’

‘There’s nothing you can do?’ Karlton asked. He kept licking his lips, perhaps realising at last that he was going to die.

‘We can trace the beam to its origin.’

‘And what good will that do?’

The pause was just long enough for Sasha to realise the utter

contempt the Dalek had for Karlton. Then it said ‘If the beam is neutralised, the process will stop. The star will stabilise.’

‘We just need to turn it off,’ Sasha realised.

‘But surely it’s coming from light years away,’ Karlton said.

‘Particle beam traced,’ a Dalek reported in the background. It glided over to join its leader close to the camera. ‘Coordinates are 1791 by 4389 from gamma 6-2.’

It meant nothing to Sasha, but Karlton was frowning. The

technicians all turned to look at him. Surprise, shock, disbelief.

‘But,’ Karlton said, ‘those coordinates... That can’t be...’

‘Data is confirmed,’ the Dalek announced. ‘Source of neutron

destructor beam is this space station.’

And Sasha was running.

They wanted to die. That was what Leon had told me. Karlton and the others – they had kept the ‘patients’ alive. Refused to let them die.

They’d let the human-Daleks use any equipment they wanted, except weapons – or so they thought. Hoped they would unlock the secrets.

Instead they’d used it to commit suicide. Taking a million others with them. ‘Leon!’ I yelled, as soon as I was in the room. No rad-suit.

No time. And maybe no point. ‘Where is it? Where’s the beam being sent from? How do we shut it down?’

They all looked exactly the same, but the Dalek that was exactly where Leon had been, as if it had not moved at all, looked at me.

‘Take us to the saucer,’ it demanded. ‘Take us to the Daleks.’

‘And you’ll tell them how to stop it?’

‘Take us to the saucer.’

‘Why?’

‘Take us to the saucer.’

‘If I do, will you end this?’ I said.

There was no hesitation. ‘Yes.’

I almost laughed with relief. Didn’t understand, ‘Thank you, Leon,’

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I said

So many lies.

Karlton thought I was mad. They could listen in on what was said.

But I had to be in there. What if the Daleks didn’t let us hear what was going on? What if it went wrong? What if..? The heavy door into the transparent tube swung open and we were in space – protected only by the flimsy plastic of the tube. Stars and blackness. So beautiful.

The airlock into the saucer was already open. A Dalek was waiting.

The door had been opened, but I didn’t register that as a problem. I didn’t realise that meant the saucer had more power than we thought.

The Dalek led us through to the main control room.

‘You all right, Sasha?’ Karlton asked – his voice tinny and nervous over the intercom. They could see and hear what was happening.

‘We’re on the saucer,’ I told Leon. ‘Tell us where the beam is coming from – which equipment. Help us shut it down.’

But, as you know, Leon and the others ignored me.

They lined up in front of the Dalek commander. Absolutely still.

‘We have limited power,’ the Dalek commander said.

‘You will honour our agreement,’ Leon said. ‘The humans gave

you power because of us.’

Sasha stared at the line of Daleks beside her. At the Dalek she knew had been Leon. ‘What do you mean? What agreement?’

The dome swung round and the eyestalk stared back at her. ‘The particle beam is being emitted from Test Room Nine.’

‘Got it!’ Karlton shouted over the intercom. ‘I’ll get –’

Then his voice was cut off.

‘The humans will disable the beam,’ the Dalek Commander said.

‘Yes,’ another of the patients agreed. ‘But now you have power.’

The Dalek commander swung round. Its dome turned first, then

the rest of its body swivelled after it. It glided across to a console.

The sucker arm extended and plugged into a glowing control.

‘Charging weaponry,’ it grated.

Sasha took a step back. ‘No – wait. What are you doing?’

The Dalek was turning back. Gun stick levelled.

‘What is this, Leon? You did a deal with them, didn’t you? When you were here on the saucer. That’s why they shut the sound off.

What did you agree?’

The Dalek commander fired at the first of the Daleks lined up in front of it. Red hot metal showered down round Sasha. She dived out of the way.

‘We want to die,’ the Dalek closest to her said.

Another tremendous explosion.

And another.

‘Oh, *Leon*!’

A fourth blast. Burning debris. Sound and fury.

‘I love you Leon. I always loved you.’

The eyestalk swivelled, dipped, looked at Sasha as she lay on the floor – giving the Dalek an almost quizzical expression. 'Why do you call me Leon?'

A final explosion.

Sasha was running before the sound finished. Screaming,

shouting, crying – running.

I don't know. I'll never know. Maybe one of them really was Leon.

But they lied to me – Karlton and the technicians. And Georgi Selestru. Lied to get what they wanted. And you know what – I'd probably have done the same.

But the Daleks kept their word.

Maybe one of them was Leon. Maybe that last Dalek really was Leon. And you killed him. Blasted him down.

I didn't think, just ran. I could have got away, back down the umbilical to the Station. But I had to be sure. You had your guns working. But 1 knew the ship only had a fraction of the power it needed. There was only power to the instruments. So I blew the clamps and severed the umbilical. Set us free –free to fall into the atmosphere of Minikis. Free to die.

The radiation was making her tired. Sasha propped herself against the wall of the control room. The Dalek Commander watched her, silent and impassive.

'I've killed you,' she said. 'And you know what, it was worth it.

I'm fighting back. Dying fighting. Dying knowing I've taken you with me. For Leon, however he died.'

A Dalek turned from a control panel to report. 'Entry into

planet's atmosphere in one hour. Damaged heat shield will not

protect this vessel.'

'You see,' Sasha said weakly, 'you're dead already. Why don't

you kill me too and then you can die in peace.'

The Dalek commander's eye swept over her, as if it was

considering. ‘Prepare weapons,’ it ordered.

Behind it, several Daleks were absorbing power from the

instruments, just as the commander had done.

‘Power to instrumentation depleted,’ one Dalek said. ‘Minimal

navigation systems online.’

‘Navigation?’ She struggled to sit up, to drag herself up the wall.

‘No – kill me. Shoot me. Exterminate me – now!’

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The Dalek commander stared back at her. ‘You are already dying.

We need our power.’ It turned away.

Sasha sagged, slipped back down the wall and slumped to the

floor. A panel slid open on one of the walls, revealing circular sockets behind it. The Daleks that had absorbed energy from the instruments were aiming their guns into sockets. ‘Ready to initiate emergency engine restart’

Her eyes closed. Her breathing was ragged and husky.

‘Power may be insufficient,’ another Dalek warned. ‘Planetary

gravitation field increasing.’

‘This vessel is now at risk,’ another Dalek reported.

Her lips quivered. Perhaps a smile. Perhaps a prayer. ‘I’ve

thought a thousand times about how I might die,’ Sasha murmured,

‘but I never once imagined it would be with *you*.’

The Dalek Commander swung back towards Sasha. ‘Fire

weapons.’ And somewhere below the heartbeat of the ship’s

systems, perhaps – just perhaps – as the ruby rays powered up the engines, a metallic voice grated out one final farewell.

‘ *Goodbye, Sasha*.’

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Natalie’s Diary Part Four

Joseph Lidster

‘Stay calm.’

Sarah Cerasini was still smiling as the wall screen switched itself on. ‘The Chief Minister has confirmed that an incident is currently occurring in our skies,’ she announced. ‘He has urged all citizens not to panic and to stay in their homes to await further updates.’

Holly didn’t hear her. She was staring at the monitor.

Her hands shaking, she opened the final extract.

EXTRACT BEGINS

– crouched behind a hedge.

Hex was watching the village to see if they’d been taken over yet He scrambled back towards me and said something. I wasn’t

listening. All I could think about was the woman I’d killed. All I could see in my mind were the photos of her family and her

mouthing ‘sorry’ to me. And the blood on the kitchen floor. I was so cold and couldn’t hear anything. I didn’t even know where I was.

It felt like I was underwater. I vaguely remembered how we’d left Ted and the others at the farmhouse. They were going to wait there and be ready to fight back. I think. I don’t know, it’s a blur.

The next thing I remember was muffled voices. I opened my eyes and saw a quilt. I was in a bed! I think I must have panicked

because suddenly Hex was at my side. He smiled down at me and

told me to stay calm. He said we were safe. Safe?

I must have fallen asleep again because the next thing I knew, some old woman was there instead of Hex. She asked me how I was feeling and I told her I was hungry. She told me to sit up and, as I did, she bunched up some pillows behind my back. Then she put a tray across

my lap. On it was a bowl of tomato soup! Real tomato soup! My hand shaking, I picked up the spoon, dipped it into the soup, then lifted it to my mouth. The taste was like... well, just imagine the best meal you've ever had in your life. That's what it was. It was hot and thick and real. As I finished it off, she smiled down at me.

'Well, we won't need to worry about the washing-up.'

I realised I was scraping at the bowl. Getting every last drop of orangey-red deliciousness from it. I apologised and she took the tray away. Then she came back with a glass of water. As I gulped it down, she told me what had happened. Apparently, I'd collapsed outside the village (Lenthorpe – which I knew was only a few miles from my family!). I'd gone into shock or something. Hex had

carried me into Lenthorpe and just walked up to the local pub. He hadn't known whether it would be empty or whether they were

here. But, as he'd told the villagers, it had been a risk he'd had to take. Luckily for us, the village was far away from any city so it was still untouched. Although, after what had happened at the

farmhouse, I was naturally suspicious. After I finished the water, the old woman (I never found out her name) left the room and Hex came in. He stood in the doorway with this cute, slightly

embarrassed smile. He came over to the bed, took my hand and

asked how I was doing. I couldn't look at him. I said that couldn't believe what I'd done. I'd killed someone. She'd just been trying to survive. Just like us really. He reminded me that if I hadn't done it then the people she had locked up in the cellar would now be dead.

It didn't make much difference. So he told me about the first time he'd killed someone. A while back he'd been in a place called

Ireland and he'd been helping some villagers fight some invaders.

Just like he was doing here. During the fighting, he'd killed a soldier and, he told me, it had nearly made him completely give up on life. Then, Ace had told him that he'd done what he had to do.

She'd told him that sometimes life was like that. Sometimes you had to do things to save people. Things you wouldn't usually do. I guess

this explained her shooting the Roboman in the tunnel. I'd thought she'd been so cold about it but she'd had to do it to save us.

As Hex said, it's not about wanting to fight, it's about standing up for your beliefs. It's about not letting people or monsters destroy your life. I can't say it really made me feel any better but then I didn't have time to dwell on it. Hex told me that Lenthorpe wasn't going to stay undetected for long. People had started leaving which had drawn attention to the place. He said the villagers were having a meeting downstairs and that we should join them.

There were about twenty people in the bar. All that was left of Lenthorpe. Some had gone to hide in the country while others had gone to the cities to try and help fight off the invaders. I felt a bit guilty that 1 was also one of the ones running away just to survive.

The barman, an older guy called Richard, told us that he'd got reports from Rainbow City saying there were pockets of resistance 139

starting all over the place. Apparently they were being set up by a young female off-worlder. I looked over and watched as Hex's face just lit up. Obviously, Ace had escaped the Robomen and was doing what she did best. Saving people. I tried not to feel jealous at his smile. I'd already assumed he didn't have any real feelings for me.

Richard then said he had even better news! He'd heard rumours of some kind of virus attacking the invaders. The previous night, loads of them had just started self-destructing! As the villagers cheered, Hex started to laugh which I thought was an odd reaction. Before I had chance to ask him what was so funny, he'd grabbed hold of me.

He told me that that meant the Doctor was alive. Apparently, his mate had made this computer virus and had been trying to release it when he'd been caught – just outside the pub where all this had started. As we hugged each other, Richard continued to talk. He said that while all this meant there was hope, it was no secret that Lenthorpe didn't have long left. They'd be here soon. As the

villagers started to discuss their next move, Hex took me to one side. He asked me what I wanted to do. Did I want to stay and help the people here or did I want to carry on trying to get home?

I didn't know. All I wanted to do was be with my family and for all this to be over. I wanted it to have never happened. He just stood there, looking at me. Letting me make the decision. Everything was rushing through my head. Vonnie, Martin, Shona, Tanya, Ace, Ted,

Theresa. The school kids in the cellar. The villagers in the bar. The people who'd died. The people who'd fought back. And the people who'd just been trying to survive. I realised I was having to decide whether I was Theresa or Ace. Was I just going to try and save myself or was I going to try and save our world?

And that's how, that night, I found myself building a barricade at the entrance to Lenthorpe. I was so close to my family but I was risking everything to stop them... to stop the Daleks destroying one village. I wasn't going to run any more.

The following morning, myself Hex and the others, were

crouched down behind the barricade. It completely blocked the road going into the village and was about three metres tall. Made up of sofas and chairs and tables and televisions, it was probably the worst barricade anyone had ever built. We were all armed with

whatever weapons we could find. One old woman, the one who'd

given me the soup, only had a pair of scissors but she was holding them like a sword! As the sun rose above the barricade, Hex took hold of my hand, leaned over and kissed me again. He said that no matter what happened, I'd already saved so many lives. I smiled back at him and then we turned to face the road. I was Natalie 140

Fulton and I was ready to save our world. I'd finally accepted what they'd done to it and I was going to stop them. I looked up at the sun and, feeling its warmth bathe my face, felt oddly hopeful. The Daleks were being destroyed by the Doctor's virus. Ace's resistance groups were causing trouble in the city. And here, on the outskirts of some poxy little village, Natalie Fulton and Hex Something were going to fight back.

And that's where I was when the Daleks invaded Lenthorpe.

EXTRACT ENDS

Her heart beating so fast, Holly closed the attachment.

'She survived,' she muttered to herself. 'Natalie survived.'

In a daze, she turned away from the monitor and gradually

noticed that the wall screen had activated itself. Sarah Cerasini was no longer smiling.

‘They’re here!’ she was shrieking. ‘There are Daleks in the sky.’

Holly ran over and picked up her phone. The display was still blank.

She ran over to the window and opened the curtains. Silhouetted against the burning sky, thousands of Daleks were swarming

towards the main habitation centre. Buildings were exploding and people were screaming. She backed away slowly and then screamed as the flat door burst open.

Andrew, his smart blue Tuesday shirt covered in blood, ran over and grabbed her.

‘They’re killing everyone!’ He was crying.

She gently pushed him away.

‘Come on,’ she whispered. ‘We’re getting out of the city.’

141

Museum Peace

James Swallow

The rain drumming on the roof of the ground car became a rattle as the vehicle drew to a cautious halt at the kerbside. The driver glanced over her shoulder and gave him a curious look.

‘Sir, are you sure you want me to stop here? The weather today is –’

‘Good for my circulation,’ he rumbled. ‘Open the door.’

She nodded at the heavy marble columns of the entrance a short distance up the road. ‘I could park outside, Lord Chancellor. You’ll be soaked through if you walk.’

The use of the title made him smile a little. He hadn’t been that for years, not since this girl had been a child, at least; but he appreciated that she said it. It showed respect on her part, something he was seeing less and less. He pulled his greatcoat tighter. ‘You’re new, aren’t you?’

The driver nodded. ‘Yes, sir. Assigned to your detail this cycle.’

‘What’s your name?’

‘Mirin, sir. Agent Jasta Mirin. It’s an honour to be serving you.’

Ah. She was one of *those*. If he concentrated he could sense it, the ghost of thoughts at the edge of her mind. She’d read the books about the war, seen the holoplays, even that terribly melodramatic biography from a few summers back... The poor lass thought she was doing something important here, watching over a faded old

warrior. He wanted to tell her that she ought to request a different posting, something that would stand her a better chance of

advancement in the security service; but he had met her kind before and he did not have the cruelty in him to shatter her illusions. The truth was, the protection detail was only there as a hold-over from his former high office, a part of his pension from a grateful

government. It wasn’t that he doubted he had enemies – he had

once said that the calibre of his foes was the very measure of his character – but there was a discreet laser pistol holstered at his waist, in the same place it had been for decades, and he was still confident enough in his own abilities to defend himself. The girl relented, seeing the firmness in his eyes, and released the maglock.

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The car’s gull wing door hissed open, letting the damp and cold reach inside. ‘I’ll be across the street if you need me, your lordship.’

He stepped out into the downpour and threw a weary smile back

at her. ‘You don’t need to call me that. My name is Kalendorf.

These days, only Kalendorf.’

Most people walked with their heads down, hunched forward

against the driving rain, eyes to the slick pavements. Kalendorf turned up the coat’s thick collar and met it in the face, taking some strange delight in the chill reality of it. He walked briskly across the Court of Cenotaphs, the heavy grey marble of the Great Museum

rising up beyond the orchard of obelisks. The rain gave everything a sheen, a polished freshness that was at odds with the weight of history that pressed down upon all the monuments. He caught a

glimpse of the War Memorial, the flanks of pale blue stone reaching

toward the low, dull clouds. The names picked out along its sides glittered in black and gold, spiralling around, up and up. Clustered at the base, the tiny robot guides waited like patient birds. No one was calling on their services now, but on less inclement days

visitors could ask them questions, or have them drift along the length of the memorial and highlight any name you would care to have them find.

He didn't need their help. He knew where to look to find Susan Mendes, Alby Brook, and all the others. His own name was on there too, somewhere. One day it would be inked in with black over the gold lettering, marking those who were gone; and there were

countless names like that, dark among the glimmer of the living.

He left the plaza behind, mounting the steps, feeling the pressure in his knees already. His body was a good machine, finely tuned and still running well... but it was old, and Kalendorf seemed to feel it more each day. He hadn't been a young man when the war began and, even though his kind were long-lived, it seemed like time was bearing down upon him. He wasn't as spry as he once was and his other, more ephemeral talents were gradually fading with disuse; just touching the girl's thoughts in the car had been taxing.

Crossing around the columns, he passed through the entrance,

swiping an anonymous credit disc over the donation sensor. While other people peeled back their coats and shook off the rainwater, Kalendorf did the opposite, shrinking into his cover. He tapped lightly on the frame of his visor and let the glasses go opaque. The old soldier chided himself for leaving his hat in the ground car, but he had ordered Mirin not to drop him at the entrance for a reason. A government-issue limousine would draw the attention of the

curators and he most certainly did not wish to be recognised. Not 143

here and now. Today, Kalendorf wanted some time to think. Some peace. The galleries displaying the history of Vega's colonisation and the heritage of Old Earth were popular, as always, although the dreary weather had made attendance numbers sink. He knew the

museum's layout by heart from countless visits before this one, and he took short cuts through the side halls, staying off the main corridors. Presently, Kalendorf crossed the edge of the central atrium, where the vast hologram of Vega VI and her moons drifted overhead in stately

silence, and into the Hall of Daleks.

He shied away from the sensor points where the virtual guide

avatars lurked, ready to materialise in a cloud of pixels and spout pre-programmed nuggets of information. The hall was dominated

by the sweep of an alien troop carrier's wingspan, the curved ship hovering silently up there on suspensors. Burn marks from particle-cannon fire remained visible along the ventral surface, a mute testament to the skill of the gunnery crews who had brought the thing down over the mountains outside the capital. Beneath, an intact Dalek transolar disc platform was canted at an angle so that visitors could study it close up. He passed under the grim shadow of the troopship without looking. Glass cabinets radiated out from the centre of the chamber, and inside each one there were various twists of wreckage or items of wartime hardware. Kalendorf saw broken-off eyestalks, luminosity dischargers and cracked sensor globes alongside spacefleet-issue maser rifles, tattered slave tunics and replica combat uniforms.

And at the far end of the hall, placed at greatest distance so that anyone who entered would not be frightened by coming upon them suddenly, there were the Daleks. These did not move or become

animated through holography. These were corpses, dead shells

interred in glass, presented for the people so they might know the face of the great enemy. They were left alone here; very few visitors were comfortable enough to come even within a few metres of

them. The Hall of Daleks echoed with Kalendorf's footfalls and nothing else. There was a bench set a way back from the front of the cabinet, where he sat each time he visited. The old warrior did so once again, letting his greatcoat come open and unfold around him in a pool of dark, heavy material. Pulling off the visor, he ran a hand over the thin stubble on his chin and saw his own reflection in the glass. A craggy old fool with the face of a street fighter and eyes that had seen a lifetime of warfare. The lines of the man he once was, the iron will of a Knight of Velyshaa, that was still in there, buried somewhere deep; but he was tired all the time now and rest...

Rest still seemed beyond his reach.

He sat and stared at the killing machines, letting time become

permeable and thin. He drifted away from the moment. Kalendorf let Suz come back to him, that intent look of strength in her gaze suddenly there again. He remembered Alby and his dour humour,

the recollection tugging at the corner of his lips. Yes, they were all still there, old friends faded and careworn by time; and he was still here, unable to let go of the war –

A noise made him snap back from his reverie. A party of

schoolchildren, grumbling and sullen with the rain, came through the hall with a waspish tutor at their head. The arch woman had a beam pointer and she shone it this way and that, reading bits of text aloud from a data-slate wherever she settled. Kalendorf listened with half an ear as she held forth; not to the actual words, but to the intention and meaning she put behind them.

It tested him, but still he pressed ever so gently into her

consciousness. She was cutting through the history of the Dalek War as quickly as she could, glossing over great swathes of

information. The teacher's snapping discourse was keeping her

pupils in line, but Kalendorf could feel the discomfort in her. She didn't want to be here at all. And not once did her eyeline cross the cabinets at the far end of the hall.

He knew her sort. He had met them before, on too many

occasions. The tutor thought the war was a terrible, horrific chapter in their history, the destructive era like a taint in the human psyche.

She was trying to expunge it, to hide it away from these youngsters so they would grow up untroubled by dark memories of that time, when their great-grandparents were slaves to these alien dictators.

In her own blinkered way, she meant well, but... His jaw hardened.

Had he fought for this? Had Kalendorf strode through fire and sent friends to their deaths for this, so that generations later their sacrifices could be ignored by men and women too afraid to learn the lessons of history? He withdrew, annoyance clouding his face.

He became aware that one of the children had detached from the group and orbited closer to the case of Daleks. There was a line of

light-coloured tiles set in the flooring a couple of metres beyond the cabinet and, in the old man's experience, visitors seldom ventured across it. A sandy-haired boy no more than a dozen cycles old

hovered at the line, peering through the glass at him with slow, insolent curiosity. Kalendorf saw a steady trickle of recognition forming on the lad's face; it did not surprise him. After all, the Knight's portrait was just outside, over in the Hall of Chancellors.

He gave the boy a hard and uncompromising stare.

'Get lost,' he growled in a low voice, and received a wide-eyed 145

look in return.

The teacher called out and the child sloped back to her side,

following the party over to an enclosed holobooth near the entrance.

She ushered them inside and the tinny recording of a war

documentary began to unfold. Kalendorf snorted. The tutor and her children had been in the hall proper for less than five minutes. The boy shot him a last look from the booth and vanished within.

'Not the most popular of attractions, is it?'

The old soldier's head jerked around at the new voice and he

winced at a dart of pain from his muscles. A younger man with

curly, shoulder-length hair and an easy smile stood near the

transolar disc. Kalendorf's combat training was always with him, even now. He registered straight away that the frock coat the man wore was completely dry, which meant he had either been in the museum for hours, or he was a member of staff. He couldn't have been the latter – they had a strict and rather bland dress code – and the former was unlikely, as the doors had opened only a few

moments before Kalendorf's car had arrived. He frowned. What

was disconcerting to him was the fact that he hadn't been aware of the man entering the hall. 'I suppose not,' he allowed.

The new arrival sank his hands in his pockets and crossed the line of tiles without pause, walking languidly up to the Dalek cabinet.

Right up to it; not an arm's length away, not even a hand's. He stood almost with his nose against the barrier, just scant inches from the unblinking eyestalk of a Type Two Dalek Drone. Kalendorf had never seen anyone do that before, not in all the years he had visited the museum. The fearlessness on the man's face was something he hadn't seen for a long time. Not since the war.

'They don't look like much, do they?' he said quietly. 'Silly big pepperpots. Clumsy and awkward things. It would be hard to be

afraid of them if you didn't know what they could do.'

Kalendorf found himself nodding, his confusion deepening. The

way he talked, the tone of his voice... it was clear to the old Knight that this slight, unassuming fellow knew the Daleks as well as he did. But how could that be? He wasn't old enough to have faced them in battle. His bearing was as far from that of a military man as it could be. At best, he would have been a child in the closing days of the conflict.

He got a smile. 'Can I join you?' The man indicated the bench.

Kalendorf pressed down on his wandering thoughts and reasserted his usual grim bearing. 'I'm not looking for any companions at the moment.'

'No, neither am I.' The reply seemed a little weary. He sat

anyway, ignoring Kalendorf's sour expression. 'I remember when I first saw them, you know. A gang of tin-pot dictators living in the ashes of a dead empire, shouting and posturing. I thought that would be the last of them.'

'The Daleks are gone.' He said the words automatically, without conscious thought. It was a knee-jerk reaction, the sort of thing that one might say to a troubled child after a nightmare.

Soft grey eyes turned to him. 'Do you really believe that?'

'I want to.' Kalendorf tensed, suddenly feeling uncomfortable.

He hadn't expected to reply so... so honestly to the stranger. It wasn't like him. He was a Knight of Velyshaa, trained to be

circumspect and careful in all things. There was an odd compulsion in him, a drawing-out inherent in the younger man's manner. He didn't like it. 'We fought them and we beat them,' he said, more firmly. 'That's all they are now, all they deserve to be.' He stabbed a finger at the cabinets. 'Relics. Monsters from the past.'

'But people have a way of forgetting about the past.' The other man nodded in the direction of the holobooth. 'Don't you think?'

And all at once it was there; the cold touch of awareness, the battle-sense that had taken Kalendorf through a thousand fights and skirmishes. The dark, animal instinct that made him the superlative soldier he was. *He knows who I am. He's a potential threat*.

Gently, Kalendorf's hand slipped towards the laser pistol. All those thoughts of old foes back in the car, and now here they were.

An assassin, he imagined, sent by any one of a dozen rivals. In his time, it hadn't just been the Daleks that the Knight had brought to their knees. The Terrials, the Simbasa, the Celebi Compact; all of them still had the old man on their capture/kill lists. It wouldn't be the first time they had tried to take him.

'Kalendorf, please,' said the man, carefully spreading his hands to show he wasn't carrying any conventional weapons. 'I'm a

friend.'

'I've buried all my friends.' He had his fingers resting on the pistol grip. 'I'll bury all my enemies as well.' The Knight studied the man and *pushed*. His telepathic perception flowed out and brushed across the surface of... something. The new arrival smiled, letting him run the preternatural sense over his aura, like fingers sifting through sand. Kalendorf's breath caught in his throat. He had expected to touch a pebble and instead found a mountain. The man was impossibly ancient, by a magnitude the soldier found difficult to comprehend; and familiar too, but different with it. Confused, he blinked and let his psyche retreat, certain of only one thing. 'I know you.'

'I'm a friend, like I said. But I'm not surprised you don't

recognise me. It has been a long time since we met on Zaleria.'

'You mean Spiridon,' Kalendorf corrected automatically, the

memory of the incident flooding back. ‘But you’re not him.’ He studied the man. On the surface, there wasn’t even the first iota of similarity between the small, acerbic stranger he had encountered during the Zalerian Occupation and this taller young fellow – except the *eyes*. The eyes were identical. They were full of that same alien distance, the same strange melancholy. He considered it for a

moment. Perhaps it wasn’t so hard to accept after all; Kalendorf had seen entire worlds ripped from existence in a heartbeat, and

creatures that had emerged from parallel realities. The idea of a being who could alter his physical form so radically was not so shocking in comparison.

‘I changed,’ came the reply, as if he saw the train of thought on the warrior’s face. ‘And I will again. But there are some things I have to do first.’ He glanced up at the silent machines.

‘Doctor.’ A curious smile formed on the soldier’s lips as he

accepted it. ‘Hello again.’

‘Hello, Kalendorf. How have you been?’

‘Better,’ he admitted.

The condition of the mind was one of rage.

If there had ever been a time when the state had differed, there was no memory of it available for review. This seemed to be

correct. Any other condition would have a lesser value, it would be ineffectual. There were some species – insignificant and weaker species – that would have considered it impossible for a mind to sustain such a state for so long. This was ample proof of their frailty, and perfect justification for their eradication. It also served to prove the superiority of the mind. It was this rich hate that allowed it to live, even when darkness and silence surrounded it.

The purity of it, the utter clarity it provided, had remained

unshakeable when all other things had been lost.

It had taken some time to reach this perfection of intent, however.

That much was true. At the start, in the crippling, burning aftermath of the catastrophic silence, it had been difficult to think in an orderly

fashion. Understanding had come very slowly as the new conditions of the mind's circumstances gradually revealed

themselves. In those moments, as broken pieces of consciousness blinked in and out of awareness while the mind tried to repair itself, some species might have experienced emotional states such as fear.

This was not what transpired. Such conditions were anathema to the mind and its like. They were the domain of lesser beings. Fear was

something that it created, not experienced.

Mechanisms for chronological determination were inactive, and

so the exact measure of how much time had passed between the

burning, thunderous agony of the attack and the first proper

understanding of the changes was lost. Feeling out the borders of what had gone on took many rels. Energy was spent, bled out

through flash-purged batteries. Nutrient stores were compromised.

Motive systems were completely destroyed. It was only possible for the broken, barely functional self-repair tools to operate, and only then at speeds a fraction of their normal capacity. Power trickled in drips from the external receptor plates, and the mind turned itself first to wringing every last erg from them. In time, what little remained of the casing's active sensors were reconnected. Damage was severe; vision quadrants were impaired, magnetic, thermal, quantum and microwave detection pallets operated far below

optimal levels. Still, the mind tried to see beyond itself.

At first, comprehension was elusive. It gradually concluded that it was confined, although the method of incarceration was quite poor.

It was only a thin barrier of translucent fused silica, one that a single blow could shatter. However, with its manipulator refusing to

answer commands and an inability to move, the point was moot.

Sometimes the mind was aware that it was being observed from

outside its prison, but there seemed to be no method or rationale behind the surveillance. The humanoids that watched it stayed only

for short periods, and never with anything that approximated guided intent. The root of the great anger began here, seeded in a moment of insight when an immature humanoid attacked the cell with a

thrown piece of vegetable matter. Several others of similar age and appearance stood in front of the confinement. They emitted atonal sounds that the mind understood were directed at it. They were mocking it. They were no longer afraid.

But after hundreds of thousands of rels, the observers diminished almost to nothing. The mind was also aware of those trapped

alongside it. Although the acuity of the optical sensor was

intermittent, it perceived others of its kind through reflections on the inside of the barrier. On no occasion did the mind detect

anything resembling awareness from its kindred. Attempts to

generate a faint, localised electromagnetic pulse in order to

communicate with them were fruitless. The inevitable conclusion was that the mind was quite alone. It concluded that the casing's long-range communications system was repairable, given much

time and the dedication of almost all the available energy to the task. The mind decided; it would reconstruct this component and 149

contact the rest of its kind, who had clearly been unaware of its conscious state when they abandoned it here. And then others

would come, and the humanoids would be made to remember fear

again.

However, with the next solar day, that decision changed.

The holobooth had reached the end of its display cycle and the tutor strode out with her charges in tow. The woman dispensed data-slates to each of the children and waved them off to begin their schoolwork assignments. Kalendorf saw the sandy-haired boy

again, lurking at the edge of the chamber. He looked back at the Doctor and considered him. Zaleria, decades ago now; he and Susan Mendes had been there. Years later Kalendorf came across

fragmentary references to the renegade traveller, and they had stirred

his interest for a time. It had even become a hobby of sorts before he tired of it, sifting through the data nets for references to a

'Time Lord' in a rectangular travelling machine; but there was nothing a regimented, well-ordered mind like his could grasp hold of. Kalendorf's life ran on information, on facts and not hearsay.

The Doctor was a transient phenomenon, and there were more

pressing demands on his time. There were other wars to be fought.

Other enemies to be defeated.

But here he was again, decades later, changed and yet changeless.

'You knew we would win, didn't you? On Spiridon, even then you knew we would find victory.'

'I'm sorry I couldn't warn you about how things would turn out.'

He frowned. 'That device of yours, the blue box. So it is true that it can travel through time?'

'Yes.'

'Is it here, now?'

The Doctor looked away. 'Kalendorf, I –'

'Let me use it Let me go back to whenever they were spawned

and destroy them. Let me be *sure*, Doctor.' He felt his pulse race at the thought of it.

The Time Lord got up and walked away a few steps. 'I had that

chance once,' he said, spreading his palms. 'In my hands.'

The Knight's lip twisted. 'And you hesitated, didn't you? I can see the echo of that instant in your thoughts. You weren't willing to become them in order to destroy them, yes?' He stood and faced the Doctor. 'But that was a long time ago. And as you say, you have changed.'

'Not that much.'

'Are you sure?' He gestured around. 'Why are you here, Doctor?

Is there something you want from me? This is a strange place to 150

look for a confessional.'

He was silent for a long moment, as if he were trying to find a way to frame his thoughts. 'There's a place called Tsan, do you know it?' When the old man shook his head, the Doctor turned and forced a smile. 'It doesn't matter.' He paused. 'What do I want? I want the same thing you do, Kalendorf. I want peace.'

'But are you willing to destroy for it?'

The Doctor shook his head suddenly. 'This is a mistake. I

shouldn't have come here. 1 should go.'

Kalendorf moved, blocking his path as the Time Lord tried to

move around the cabinet. 'No. Not yet. You came here for a

reason.' He met the Doctor's gaze and saw the shadow of a terrible choice lurking behind his eyes; it was a feeling he knew too well.

'Let me tell you the truth, Doctor. I don't want peace. I've been a soldier all my days, and I know peace is a fantasy. Conflict is part of our nature, and we'll never truly be free of it. No, what I want is to know that at least this war,' he nodded at the Daleks, 'my war, is over.' Kalendorf saw the boy in front of the glass display case, trying to pretend he wasn't watching them intently. He lowered his voice. 'These people don't know the horror of it, not in the way that you or I do, and they won't be ready if it returns. I can't go to my grave knowing that they'll be unprepared if the Daleks come back.'

The Doctor's reply chilled him to the core. 'I'm not certain that it can ever be over.'

Through the mind's sporadic visual inputs, it detected the arrival of a humanoid male, typically appearing on a regular interval of

approximately six hundred and ninety one thousand, two hundred rels. At first, with its attentions solely focused on the matter of the communications repairs, it gave the male only cursory

consideration; that was until a random scan program switched to the front of the mind's consciousness and dragged a classification from the fractured depths of the casing's memory banks.

Kalendorf. Humanoid Male. Tribal identifier: Knight of

Velyshaa. Category: Enemy of the Daleks. Action: Exterminate on sight.

The mind drew more from the data files, learning the scope of the humanoid's crimes. This creature, this primitive had dared to incite rebellion against its masters. The Kalendorf male's value was

considerable, and the orders were clear.

For a time, the mind weighed its options. Directing repairs away from the communications system to the casing's inert primary

weapon would negate any possibility of recovery. It would take longer to bring the gun to combat readiness, and then longer still to 151

gather enough power to fire it; but then there were no guarantees the communicator's signal would reach a command nexus. By human

reckoning, the slow process of repair would take years, and the mind would have to work carefully and quietly, keeping the

functioning of its systems to a level that the prison's monitoring devices would not be able to detect. The procedure would be long and laborious, and it would require a singular, pathological

application of intent.

In the end, there really was no question of priorities. It was in the mind's power to exterminate Kalendorf, and so it would.

'In my thoughts, I played out this meeting with you a hundred

times,' Kalendorf felt the tension of the moment settling in his bones, and he returned to the bench. 'I imagined all sorts of

dazzling, airtight logic that I could put to you that would convince you to let me erase them from history. But then I never saw you again and I became convinced your time machine was just a fairy tale.' He gave a rueful smile. 'But still... Do you know, back when I was in my second term as Lord Chancellor, I even had a black

projects group created to investigate the potential of temporal weapons? We were going to build a bomb to send into the past. I wanted to find Skaro and obliterate it before life had even formed on its surface.'

‘I know,’ admitted the Doctor. ‘Your people were doing quite

well for a while. But it would have upset the balance of things.’

The Knight’s face creased. The project’s failure had ultimately cost him his re-election. ‘And you can’t have that, can you? It’s fine for you to intervene here and there, shift the flow of a small stream now and then. But to dam the whole river? Somehow that’s wrong.’

‘I’ve had this conversation more times than I’ve saved the

universe,’ retorted the Time Lord, ‘and no one ever really

understands it. History is not binary, Kalendorf. One-zero, on-off, life-death. It doesn’t work that way. What the Daleks have done, who they are and what they will do, those things have already been written on the face of the universe. In the cracks in between we can change things, little things...’ His voice drifted off. ‘At least, I used to think that was true.’

Kalendorf shook his head. ‘You have the ability to exterminate the Daleks, Doctor. If what they say about you is true, you always have.’

‘There has to be another way!’ The burst of anger from the other man came out of nowhere, and the Knight was shocked by its

ferocity. ‘Why does it all have to end in destruction, old soldier?

Can you tell me that? Why does it have to be death?’

Once again, he sensed the icy pressure there in the Doctor’s

mind, the ghost of a decision that dwarfed the worst judgements Kalendorf had ever had to make; and all at once he understood why the Time Lord was here. ‘You have a choice, Doctor. I can only discern the vaguest edges of it, the size and complexity of the moment.’ His hand went to his lips. ‘Oh, I pity you. It’s hollowed you out, hasn’t it? Such a great, awful choice to make. That’s why you came to speak to me. Because you know I am a warrior,

because my gift allows me an insight into what you are facing.’

The Doctor’s face was pale, a faint sketch of the warm, smiling aspect he had shown on his arrival. ‘The chance to free the universe of the Daleks. But the price... The price is everything I know.’

The weapon had been ready for quite some time. The mind gathered in the energy to fire and kept it hidden, deep in the casing, shunting the power to the core of the battery packs where it lay out of range of the cell's detectors. There had already been a number of

occasions when the target Kalendorf had presented himself before the cabinet, but the mind understood from the humanoid's records that he was a unique quarry. He would see any motion from the gun and avoid it, so the shot had to come while the emitter barrel was static. This narrowed the attack options significantly. In addition, the performance of the casing's optical sensor array was

deteriorating. Incidents of blackouts and imaging disruption were now occurring with increased regularity, and the mind estimated that total failure of the vision system was likely to occur very soon.

Even now, focal depth monitoring was discontinuous. The target Kalendorf was visible at the edge of the optical sensor envelope, but the engagement zone was cluttered by the appearance of another humanoid male. Automatically, the mind swept the second biped

with its recognition scan.

The Doctor. Gallifreyan Male. Tribal identifier: Time Lord.

Category: Enemy of the Daleks. Fiction: Exterminate on sight.

For the briefest of moments, rage gave way to surprise; then the fury returned tenfold. The mind had been presented with two of the most valued targets in the memory bank's inventory, both equally hated, both equally deserving. The killing urge rose, and the power flowed up and into the weapon's pre-fire chamber. The gun

announced its readiness, the coiled energy for one single, lethal burst of radiation ready to be unleashed. There would be only one shot, and after it was released, the mind understood that what fragmentary existence it still had would be forfeit; but it would be worth it, to show that the reach of its race was unbound, that their revenge was limitless.

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And carefully, the Dalek made the choice of which of them to

murder.

It happened with horrific speed.

In the periphery of his vision, Kalendorf saw the beam weapon shift the most infinitesimal of fractions, dipping so that the grey Dalek could have a clear line of fire. In his mind, he was still the young man, still the vital and indomitable Knight capable of winning wars single-handed; but time had robbed him of that reality. As fast as his nerves sent the impulses, his age-worn muscles could not match them. As swift as he was, Kalendorf was still too slow, fingers tightening on the laser, tearing the compact pistol from the folds of his greatcoat, crying out. He saw the Doctor turning, throwing out his hands in a gesture of protection, shouting. Too late. Too late.

The blue-white beam of coherent energy shattered the glass

cabinet. The shriek of superheated air molecules crashed about the chamber, the horribly familiar sound cutting into Kalendorf's soul.

He had prayed that he would never hear that noise again.

The boy took the shot point-blank in the chest, for one monstrous second his flesh flashing translucent with the killing discharge, the tiny frame of his skeleton visible. The child died without a scream, falling to the marble floor.

Kalendorf's pistol sprayed laser bolts up the length of the Dalek, tearing through its casing and ripping it apart. Decrepit, decayed organic components boiled away.

The Dalek attempted to speak, but all that came out was a

strangled, grating death rattle.

Adrenalin shock flooded through the old man, and he began to

tremble. It was difficult to hold the gun, but he kept his fingers tight around it. It was comforting, in its own sad way.

Crouching over the child, the Doctor closed the sandy-haired

boy's eyes and did not look up. 'It was still alive. After all that time.'

Alarms were sounding all through the building, the internal

security sensors alight with the discharge from the weapons. 'Yes.'

Kalendorf cast a practised gaze over the alien killer. 'It would have

been inert when they found it, must have escaped the detectors of the recovery crews. No one could have known.' He nudged a

shattered hemisphere with his boot. 'It must have been gathering energy for years through its solar collectors...' The Knight looked up at the tiny skylight in the roof 'Hoarding every scrap of power.

Waiting for the right moment.'

'But to kill a child...' The Doctor's indignant anger was towering.

'What possible threat could he have been to it?'

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Kalendorf studied the Dalek's eyestalk. Part of the lens was

milky-white. 'The optic sensor was badly damaged. It couldn't see him. He was... He was just in the line of fire.' He looked away. 'A new victim in an old war.'

With great delicacy, the Doctor gathered up the boy's body. The Knight holstered his pistol and took the boy from him. 'This is the price, Doctor,' he husked, his voice thick with emotion. 'Every child, every being that lives is under threat so long as the Daleks exist. You must make the choice, Doctor, whatever it is, whatever it costs you.' Kalendorf walked from the hall and did not look back.

The tutor came running, the indelible horror shattering her thoughts, The Knight felt the rough edges of them as he passed her by, as she fell to her knees and began to weep. The tidal drag of long-buried nightmares pulled at her, as her children stood around in a loose halo, not understanding what had happened.

The boy was light. He carried him out through the halls, out

between the towering pillars of the entrance and past the milling, panicking people. Some of them were as old as he was, some of

them had the old fear in their eyes. Yes, he wanted to tell them, the war still goes on.

The soldier crossed to the base of the memorial and the guide

robots shuffled out of his way. Kalendorf knelt and lay the dead child on the broad stone plinth. He felt empty. What was the boy's name? He had nothing to hand that he could use to carve it into the stone.

After a moment he stepped back and let his gaze range up along the height of the memorial.

Splashing, frantic footsteps signalled Mirin's approach behind him. 'Lord Chancellor!' she shouted. The woman had a stub-gun in her hand, panning it about in search of any aggressors. 'Are you all right, sir?'

'I'm not wounded,' Kalendorf replied.

'The museum!' Mirin said breathlessly. 'I heard the alarms! The security scanners said a Dalek attacked you in there!' He could tell she could hardly believe it. 'There was weapons fire and –'

'The Dalek is dead,' he spoke over her. 'There was only one

casualty.'

The agent's panting slowed as she saw the boy. 'Oh.' Her

composure slipped for a moment, then returned. Duty first, just as he expected from her. 'But the other man. The scanners recorded a third person in the hall. He seems to have vanished. Do you know who he was, sir?'

Kalendorf turned his face to the rain. 'Someone looking for

peace.'

Return of the Daleks

Written by **Nicholas Briggs**

Directed by **John Ainsworth**

No one could ever know. We had to erase the past.

Change everything. Start again.

But even though it's been centuries now... In our

hearts, none of us feels truly... Safe. I think, even if our

people were to survive until the end of time itself,

we would still fear... The return of the Daleks.

CAST

The Doctor ..... **Sylvester McCoy** Kalendorf
..... **Gareth Thomas** Susan Mendes
..... **Sarah Mowat** Skerrill
..... **Christine Brennan** Mendac
..... **Hylton Collins** Aytrax
..... **Jack Galagher** The Daleks
..... **Nicholas Briggs** 156

Return of the Daleks

Nicholas Briggs

1. INT. TARDIS. CONTROL ROOM.

DOCTOR

(*A deep breath as he wakes*) Mel? Ace... Hex?

Where...? (*Realising*) All gone. Of course. Time passes. History moves on. And... is the sickness gone? (*Suddenly frantic*) Mirror, where's that mirror?

Much scrambling about and clatter of searching through bags and drawers. Finally the sound of a glass mirror emerging.

DOCTOR

(*Sign of relief*) Yes, there I am. That's me...

2. NARRATION.

SKERRILL

No one could ever know.

We had to erase the past.

Change everything.

Start again.

But even though it's been centuries now...

In our hearts, none of us feels truly...

Safe.

I think, even if our people were to survive until

the end of time itself, we would still fear...

The return of the Daleks.

Crash in Doctor Who *theme*.

3. INT. ZALERIA CENTRAL OFFICE. CORRIDOR.

Alarm is sounding, echoing through the corridors. Determined footsteps echo. Footsteps stop. Button is pressed. Bleep.

COMP Identify.

KALENDORF

You know it's me!

COMP Identify.

KALENDORF Kalendorf.

COMP Enter.

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Door opens. Footsteps. Door closes.

4. MT. ZALARIA CENTRAL OFFICE. SUZ'S OFFICE.

KALENDORF

Did you know about this?

SUZ

Something to do with their science division.

Just a small team.

KALENDORF

So you did know.

SUZ

As of about thirty seconds ago. Don't be so

suspicious, Karl.

Alarm stops.

KALENDORF

Science division... What the hell do they want

here on Zaleria?

SUZ

Contrary to popular opinion, they don't exactly

take me into their confidence.

KALENDORF

(*Sarcastic*) You surprise me.

SUZ

I think we both know where our loyalties lie.

KALENDORF

Do we? Sometimes I wonder.

SUE

I don't have time to wonder.

KALENDORF Anything

else?

SUZ

They expect to be greeted by the civil

administration.

KALENDORF Of

course.

SUZ

You can handle that, can't you?

KALENDORF

Your wish is my command, Angel of Mercy.

But they're not going to like it.

Music: strident, threatening. Burst of retro fire. Cross-fade to: **S. EXT. ZALERIA. LANDING PAD.**

Spaceship is landing.

DORLA

(*Panicked*) Kalendorf! What's going on? Our

people are fearing the worst, they –

KALENDORF

Tell your people to stay calm, Dorla. You

understand me? This is just some routine science nonsense, so the 158

last thing we want is panic in the streets. You know what happens when they get jumpy... people die.

Final retro roar of landing. The dust settles. Door of ship opens.

KALENDORF

(*Entirely without feeling*) On behalf of the civil

administration of this planet, I welcome you and your –

DALEK

Where is Susan Mendes?

KALENDORF

The Angel of Mercy is engaged in important

work for the Dalek Empire –

DALEK

She was ordered to report here.

KALENDORF She…

er…

(*Lost for words*)

DALEK Speak!

KALENDORF

She sends her apologies. An Angel's work is

never done, you know.

DALEK

Silence! This scientific division's needs

supersede all others. You will ensure that our work here is

unimpeded.

KALENDORF

Er… of course. If there's any way in which –

DALEK

Additional security measures will be necessary.

Dalek Command on Zaleria will be reinforced.

A marching sound of heavy feet fades in.

DALEK 1

Additional security force disembarking now.

The marching becomes louder.

KALENDORF

And... these are your –

DALEK

Ogrons! They obey Dalek commands without

question and will crush all forms of rebellion without mercy.

Marching builds. Music builds.

DALEK Halt!

Marching stops with a crash to attention from a hundred or so Ogron boots.

OGRON

What are your orders, master?

DALEK

Establish exclusion perimeter around Dalek

Command Block and set up security checkpoints at all major

interchanges throughout the city.

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OGRON Yes,

master.

DALEK

Nothing must be allowed to interfere with our plan!

Music crescendos.

6. EXT. ZALERIA. JUNGLE.

Establish jungle atmosphere (rather like Spiridon).

TARDIS materialises.

7. INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM.

Background fx are McGann TV movie style. Controls operated.

Scanner fx. Distorted sound of jungle.

DOCTOR

(*To himself*) The planet known as Zaleria...

during the time of the second great Dalek occupation. Hmm what secrets will unfold?

8. INT. SUE'S OFFICE.

SUZ

Ogrons? What the hell are Ogrons?

KALENDORF

I don't know, but they're pretty brutish-looking,

probably semi-simian large, muscular and I'd say they were having exactly the effect the Daleks want.

SUZ

What do you mean?

KALENDORF

The Zalerians at the landing pad were visibly

quaking at the sight of them... and the mood in the city is getting pretty ugly.

SUZ

But why do the Daleks want extra security?

This

planet has a completely unblemished record of cooperation.

KALENDORF Huh...

'unblemished'.

SUZ

(*Sharp*) What?

KALENDORF

You sound almost proud. The irony is that it's

these new, heavy-handed security tactics which threaten to

besmirch your unblemished record.

SUZ

(*Deliberately ignoring him*) I want to know what this

scientific division's mission is.

KALENDORF

Why? So you can help?

160

Pause.

SUZ

(*Quietly powerful*) If you haven't got anything

useful to say, Karl... Why don't you... go about your business?

Comma bleep.

KALENDORF Who's

that?

SUZ

It's a total comma override. They're cutting

across all –

DALEK

(*Distort*) Attention! Attention! Citizens of

Zaleria. This is...

Cross-fade to:

9. INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM.

The Dalek speech from the previous scene continues, distorted, on the TARDIS scanner.

DALEK

(*Distort*) ... Dalek Control. Attention!

Attention! Citizens of Zaleria. These are your new...

Over this...

DOCTOR

(*To himself*) And this is where the trouble really

starts...

Cross-fade back to:

10. INT. SUE'S OFFICE.

DALEK

(*Distort*) ... orders! Outer sectors five, seven

and nine will be evacuated immediately.

KALENDORF

Five, seven... that's –

DALEK

(*Distort*) Repeat. Outer sectors five, seven and

nine will be evacuated immediately If evacuation is not completed by zero-four hours, Zalerian time, those remaining inhabitants in sectors five, seven and nine will be destroyed. This is your final warning.

SUZ

It's the Elders' Settlements... Why the Elders' –

DALEK

(*Distort*) Additionally, Zalerian worker shifts

will be selected for special duties. The Angel of Mercy will

announce the selection at zero-four-five-zero hours.

161

Comms bleep.

SUZ

Will I now?

KALENDORF

What the hell are they playing at? They've got a

pretty tame planet here... and now they're going to cause chaos. It's nothing short of a major upheaval - and the Zalerians are not going to like it.

SUZ

We'll see what the Dalek Supreme has to say

about this.

KALENDORF

(*Laughs*) I admire your optimism. You

seriously think –

SUZ

Thank you, Karl. You may go.

KALENDORF

(*Containing his anger*) Of course Angel of

Mercy.

11. EXT. ELDER SETTLEMENT.

Jungle sounds. Vocal sounds of Zalerian inhabitants hurrying to evacuate. Some panic. Rumble of transport ships descending.

DALEK

(*P.A. distort*) Evacuate! Evacuate! All Zalerians

will evacuate this sector! Transport ships will depart at zero-three-five-zero Zalerian time. (*Continues under…*)

Transport ship touches down in the foreground, obliterating all other sounds.

Cross-fade to:

12. INT. ELDER'S HOUSE.

SKERRILL

There must be no bloodshed, Talamar. You

understand me? This is not the time.

Talamar is speaking from amongst a jostling crowd of Zalerians.

Some distorted panic and much chatter in the background.

TALAMAR

(*Distort*) I understand, Skerrill, but our people

need to hear that from you. No one was prepared for this. The

Angel of Mercy has always guaranteed –

SKERRILL

The Angel of Mercy is as much a slave as we

are, Tal. She's never pretended to be anything else… and she will have done her best for us, you know that. But she has no power to override Dalek commands. Gather the other Elders at the landing 162

pad. I will be there soon. There are things I must do first. Now go!

Comms bleep. A door hums open

DOCTOR

Don't take any of your secrets with you,

Skerrill.

SKERRILL Who...?

DOCTOR

I'm a friend. Believe me, when you're gone, the

Daleks will flatten this area, incinerate it. There'll be nothing left.

They won't be searching for secret plans. They've bigger fish to fry.

SKERRILL Secret

plans?

DOCTOR

For rising up against the Daleks.

SKERRILL

I'm afraid I don't know what you mean.

DOCTOR

Of course you don't. All I'm saying is, you'll

all be searched when you're relocated. Full security screening. Best not to carry your secrets with you... even if you don't know what I mean

SKERRILL Who

are

you?

DOCTOR A

friend.

SKERRILL

(*A short, disbelieving laugh*) So you said.

DOCTOR

It isn't safe for you to know any more than that.

SKERRILL

What are you doing here? There were only a

handful of humans on this planet when we were invaded. And the Daleks keep you all in the central zones under strict –

DOCTOR

Maybe I'm not human, Skerrill.

SKERRILL

You look human.

DOCTOR

And I wasn't here when the Daleks invaded.

The Dalek evacuation announcement (see previous scene) on PA becomes dimly audible in the background.

SKERRILL

I have to leave.

DOCTOR Yes,

you

do.

SKERRILL

So, what do you want?

DOCTOR

I want to speak to Kalendorf.

SKERRILL

Why should you think I could –

DOCTOR

I wouldn't ask if I didn't know you could pass

the message on.

Pause.

SKERRILL

Why should I trust you?

DOCTOR I

trust

you.

SKERRILL

How... would Kalendorf find you?

DOCTOR

Oh, don't worry... You can leave that to me.

Music, slightly sinister.

13. INT. DALEK CONTROL. ZALERIA.

DALEK 1

(*Distort*) Evacuation proceeding according to

schedule.

DALEK

Are explosive charges in position?

DALEK 1

(*Distort*) Confirmed. Detonations set to

commence in fifty rels. One transport ship reports engine

malfunction. It will not be able to lift off before detonation deadline.

DALEK

The transport ships are piloted by Ogrons.

Proceed with detonation. There will be no loss of Dalek life. There must be no delay.

DALEK 1

(*Distort*) Understood.

Comms bleep off.

A minor alarm bleep as the Dalek makes connection to the Dalek command net. A slight echo on its voice.

DALEK

(*Echo*) Attention all Dalek units. Once

designated areas have been obliterated, seismic probing will

commence. Our objective must be located with all speed.

Comms bleep. Echo stops.

DALEK 2 Incoming

communication.

DALEK Speak!

SUZ

(*Distort*) I request entry to Dalek Control.

DALEK

Not necessary. It will soon be time for you to

announce Zalerian worker shifts selected for special duties.

SUZ

(*Distort*) That's what I've come to discuss with

you. (*Pause*) Hello?

DALEK

Discussion is not necessary. You will obey your

orders.

SUZ

(*Distort*) I carry the authority of the Dalek

Supreme. I obey only his direct order.

DALEK

You are a subject of the Dalek Empire. You will

obey all Dalek commands without question.

SUZ

(*Distort*) My work across the galaxy has been of

vital importance to the Dalek Empire. The presence of your

scientific division on this planet is already causing unrest amongst the local population. If you don't want that unrest to escalate into full-scale –

DALEK

Do not dare to threaten the Daleks. You will

obey –

SUZ

(*Distort*) Consult your standing orders! I

demand to see you... face-to-face.

DALEK Request

denied.

SUZ

(*Distort*) It is not a request! It is my right! You

have one specific mission here. One mission. That's all! My

mission is to aid the entire war effort... To ensure that valuable Dalek resources are not wasted on costly suppression of

insurrection on conquered worlds. I was sent on that mission by the Dalek Supreme himself. I've spent years facilitating the peaceful occupation of over half the galaxy. And it's that peace which has ensured that your armies and resources have been free to prosecute your war. A war... a war that we – you, the Daleks, are winning!

Pause. A low, burbling noise of data ting on a screen.

SUZ (Distort)

Well?

DALEK

I have consulted standing orders. You may

enter.

Comms bleep off.

DALEK

Time to detonation?

165

DALEK 2

Detonation in ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five,

four, three, two, one.

During this, cross-fade for

14. EXT. ELDERS' SETTLEMENTS.

Peaceful jungle sounds.

Sudden, massive explosions. A wall of incinerating fire. Cross-fade to...

15. INT. BAR ZALERIA.

The low throb of seedy music. Odd mutters from seedy clientele.

The rumble of distant explosions, the sound just reaching this location now. Some glasses rattle.

Skerrill and Kalendorf speak quietly, mindful not to be overheard.

Chinking sound of a glass.

SKERRILL

They did it then.

KALENDORF

Did you honestly think they'd wait?

SKERRILL

I was on the last transport to lift off. I saw the

other one... engines were stalling. Half the ships here are burnt-out wrecks. Huh, they couldn't even be bothered to invade us with

decent hardware.

KALENDORF

And the Daleks are never going to miss a

detonation deadline, are they? I'm sorry. Did you know...?

SKERRILL

Any of the people on board? What kind of

question's that? I knew them all. They were my people.

KALENDORF I'm

sorry.

SKERRILL

I know you are, Kalendorf. But what good does

that do? (*Pause*) You want to know why I sent word for you.

KALENDORF

I… assumed it must be something… important…

for you to take the risk.

SKERRILL

More important than a thousand of my people

dying on a transport ship just because the Daleks have a deadline fixation? Sometimes it's hard to know what really is important any more.

KALENDORF

It's important that you stop your people from

rising up against the Daleks. I know you're angry. I know there's 166

anger throughout the city… But they wouldn't stand a chance. None of us would… not yet. It's too soon.

SKERRILL

And I have to trust you, don't I?

KALENDORF

Trust is all we have, Skerrill. It's one of the

things that sets us apart from the Daleks.

SKERRILL

You're very… persuasive… a diplomat,

Kalendorf.

KALENDORF

Not by birth

DOCTOR

By birth he's a warrior.

SKERRILL

(*Surprised*) How the hell – [did you get in here?]

KALENDORF

If you want to get out of here alive, you'd better

explain exactly who you are and what you're doing here. Well?

SKERRILL

He's why I asked to see you.

KALENDORF

You brought him here?

SKERRILL

No. I don't know how he got in here. I was just

going to tell you that some strange human said he wanted to see you. He said I could leave the rest to him. I don't think I believed him.

DOCTOR

I needed someone to tempt the mighty

Kalendorf away from the Daleks' web of security.

KALENDORF

You succeeded. Now what?

DOCTOR

Skerrill, I wonder if you'd be so kind as to leave

Kalendorf and me to talk alone?

KALENDORF

I have no secrets from the Zalerian people.

DOCTOR

Oh, everyone has secrets, isn't that right,

Skerrill?

16. INT. DALEK COMMAND. ZALERIA.

In the middle of a heated exchange with the Dalek commander.

SUZ

But that was completely unacceptable! It would

have taken a matter of hours – probably less than one hour – to have another transport ship fly in and transfer the Zalerians from –

DALEK

There must be no delay!

SUZ

What the hell could be so important that you'd

just murder –

DALEK

The lives of the creatures on this planet are of

no importance to us.

SUZ

The 'creatures on this planet' are a volatile

people. The Dalek occupation here has only been successful

because I've been given the authority to –

DALEK

You will now select worker shifts for special

duties!

SUZ

What are these 'special duties'?

DALEK

That is of no concern of yours. You will select

two shifts immediately.

SUZ Why?

DALEK

Further selections may be necessary once this

scientific division has relocated operations.

SUZ

Relocated...? To the sectors you've just blown

up? Why? What are you going to do there?

DALEK

No further questions! You will announce the

selected worker shifts immediately.

SUZ Announce

them

yourselves!

DALEK

Standing orders state that the Angel of Mercy

will facilitate all delicate matters of population order and control.

SUZ

Oh, so you admit you need me.

DALEK

It is your function. It is why you remain alive.

SUZ

But you have no authority to execute me.

DALEK

In this instance... we have.

Pause.

Music. Low and threatening.

SUZ

(*Rattled*) What's so important about this planet?

DALEK

Step to the communications unit and make the

announcement. Noooowww!

Music reaches a crescendo.

168

17. INT. BAR ZALERIA. PRIVATE BOOTH.

Fairly confined acoustic. Door closes. Rustle of clothes as they sit.

KALENDORF

All right. We're alone. That's what you wanted.

Start talking.

DOCTOR

What exactly is this place?

KALENDORF

It's a private booth in Bar Zaleria. You really

don't want to know the rest. What's your name?

DOCTOR

You're a Knight of Velyshaa. You were on a

secret peace mission to make a defence pact with the Earth Alliance when you got caught up in a massive Dalek invasion of the galaxy.

KALENDORF

I said, what is your name?

DOCTOR

(*Undeterred*) But that was years ago. Since

then, you've tagged along with Susan Mendes, the legendary Angel of Mercy. And together, the two of you have become the biggest traitors to civilisation since –

An echoing public-address system alarm.

DALEK (Distort) Attention! Attention! This is Dalek Command.

Citizens of Zaleria, the Angel of Mercy will now speak.

DOCTOR

'Angel of Mercy' the willing puppet of the

Daleks.

KALENDORF

(*Low and terrifying*) I'm only going to give you

one warning –

SUZ

(*Distort, totally numb*) Zalerian worker shifts 739 and 04567 will report to the Dalek Command Block immediately for

special duties. Any... any workers who fail to attend by fourteen-zero-seven hours Zalerian time be executed. That is all.

The alarm sounds with finality.

KALENDORF

Have you anything else to say? Or can I just kill

you now?

DOCTOR

Can you keep a secret?

KALENDORF

I've had enough of this. Skerrill's people will

deal with –

DOCTOR

I've come to you, Kalendorf, because the

Daleks know me. They know me of old. I've fought more battles

with them than I dare to remember... and who knows, one day,

maybe, they'll win. And that's my greatest fear.

KALENDORF Who

are

you?

DOCTOR

I'm the Doctor. And I know who you and Suz

are. I know what you're really doing. And do you know something?

The chances are you're going to succeed.

KALENDORF

I don't know what you're talking about.

DOCTOR

But it isn't about talking, is it, Kalendorf? You

reach out with your mind, don't you? You're a telepath. You've planted the seed of rebellion in the minds of every planet you and Suz have been taken to. Yes, I know. I know.

Pause.

KALENDORF

And what else do you know, Doctor?

DOCTOR

That something's going to go horribly wrong if

we don't put it right.

KALENDORF What...

exactly?

DOCTOR

There's a terrible secret buried here.

KALENDORF

Buried? What the hell are you talking about?

DOCTOR

Why do you think the Dalek science division is

here? They've been searching for this planet ever since they began the invasion of the galaxy.

KALENDORF

All right, and now they've found it, but what –

DOCTOR

They don't know they've found it yet. They've

been through this a hundred times. But this time, they're hopeful.

They're beginning to suspect they've got it right, that they're about to unleash the most powerful Dalek army ever created.

Music. Crescendo. Impending doom.

18. INT. DALEK CONTROL ZALERIA.

DALEK

Dalek Command to Outer Sectors five, seven

and nine. Report!

DALEK 1

(*Distort*) Seismic probes are now in position.

DALEK

Proceed with triangulation pulse.

170

19. INT. DALEK SEISMIC CONTROL.

DALEK 1

Proceeding with pulse... now!

Control activated. A huge, subsonic noise like a massive, low sonar bleep. Followed almost immediately by two more pulses. They reverberate wildly.

Echoes of pulses continue throughout. Tracking controls chatter.

DALEK 1

Seismic triangulation proceeding.

20. INT. BAR ZALERIA. CORRIDOR.

Echo of pulses rumbles on here.

Door opens. Kalendorf's urgent footsteps.

KALENDORF

What the hell was that?

SKERRILL

I was just going to come in and ask you the

same question.

KALENDORF

(*Quietly*) It's coming from underground.

They're looking for something.

SKERRILL

Looking for something?

Rumble slowly begins to subside.

SKERRILL

What did that strange man want?

KALENDORF

He... Where is he? I thought he was behind...

SKERRILL

Is he still in the booth?

Footsteps and a scuff to halt.

KALENDORF He's

gone.

21. INT. SEISMIC CONTROL.

Tracking controls chattering. Burble of read-outs.

DALEK

(*Distort*) Report on triangulation results.

DALEK 1

Final readings now arriving.

A resolute bleep and a continuing chime.

DALEK 1

(*Triumphant*) Objective located!

22. INT. DALEK CONTROL ZALERIA.

DALEK

Excellent! Inform Dalek Central Command that

we will now proceed with drilling operation.

DALEK 2 I

obey.

DALEK

Experimentation on Zalerian worker shifts will

commence!

23. INT. DALEK HOLDING CELL.

Mumbles and coughing of other Zalerians held here. Thumping on metal door.

DORLA

Let us out of here! We haven't done anything

wrong! Why are you keeping us here? The Angel of Mercy –

Door slides open.

DALEK GUARD The Angel of Mercy is a servant of the Daleks.

She cannot help you now.

DORLA

What...? What's going to happen to us?

DALEK GUARD You will move ahead of us and follow my

directions. Move! Move! Move!

24. INT. DALEK LABORATORY.

Much bleeping of various scientific equipment. A very busy electronic background.

Far right in the stereo field: the radio distorted sounds of many footsteps of many Zalerians entering a 'light chamber'.

DALEK AIDE

Zalerians now entering light chamber.

DALEK SCIENTIST Position them in front of the lightwave projectors.

DALEK AIDE

Zalerians will stand in front of projectors!

DALEK GUARD

(*Distort*) I obey.

DORLA

(*Distort*) What are these things? What's

going on? You can't –

DALEK GUARD

(*Distort*) Silence! If you speak again, you

will be exterminated!

Pause.

DALEK AIDE

All Daleks will leave chamber.

Radio distorted sound of doors closing.

DALEK AIDE Chamber...

clear.

DALEK SCIENTIST Lightwave projectors fire!

Massive whoosh of terrible power.

Zalerians scream in terrible agony. Scream builds with whoosh of power. Screams echo horribly for some time.

25. EXT. PLAIN OF STONES.

Fizzle of ice pools. Bleak wind is blowing. Footsteps across mud.

SUZ You're

late.

KALENDORF

It was difficult getting out of the city –

SUZ

This'd better be good, Karl. Something big is

going on and I –

KALENDORF

That's why I arranged to meet you out here!

Or would you have preferred it if I'd walked straight into your office and had this conversation with you, under full Dalek

surveillance?

SUZ

Say what you have to say. Don't touch me!

There's no need for your telepathy. Look at this place, there's nobody for miles around. It's safe to talk.

Pause.

KALENDORF

Very well. I've received... 'intelligence' that –

SUZ 'Intelligence'?

(*Mocking*) Are you suddenly in

contact with Earth's Security Services?

KALENDORF

There's a massive Dalek army buried deep

under the surface.

SUZ

What here? On Zaleria?

KALENDORF

Yes. Didn't you hear them firing the seismic –

SUZ

And how did you find this out? Who's your

contact? (*Pause*) You don't trust me any more, do you?

KALENDORF

It's... best you don't know.

173

SUZ

(A little shaken) I... see. Do you trust your

source?

KALENDORF

I don't think we can risk not trusting. it.

SUZ

So what do you want me to do?

KALENDORF

Cover for me, while I'm away.

SUZ Away?

Where?

KALENDORF

Can you do that? Or is that too much to ask?

SUZ

Of course not. Karl... (*She's about to 'build*

bridges' with him, but does not know what she's going to say.)
KALENDORF Yes?

SUZ

I... I know things – [have been difficult

between us.]

Comms bleep.

SUZ

I'd better take this... (*Answering call*) Susan

Mendes. (*Listens for some time*) Wha,...? I see. Of course. I'm on my way back.

KALENDORF

What is it?

SUZ

Screams have been heard coming from the

Dalek Control Block.

KALENDORF Screams?

SUZ

The work shifts I nominated went in there. I

think... I think they're killing them.

KALENDORF

But... who's heard these... If –

SUZ

Everyone in a three-block radius has heard...

and beyond that, the story is travelling. The first riots have started.

Is that cover enough for you? Do what you have to do, Karl.

Cross-fade to:

26. EXT. STREET. ZALERIA CITY.

Rioting Zalerians, very angry large mob of several hundred.

DALEK

(*P.A. distort*) Rioting Zalerians will disperse

immediately. Disperse immediately!

Thunderous marching of Ogron footsteps approaching.

174

DALEK

(*P.A. distort*) Disperse or Ogron forces will be

deployed

Some foreground cries are heard.

ZALERIAN

What are you doing to them? Murderers!

ZALERIAN 2

You’re killing them! Killing our people! You

took them in there and you killed them!

A Dalek alarm sounds.

DALEK

(*P.A. distort*) Ogrons will quell insurrection

immediately! Ogrons, advance!

Marching starts up. Rattling of batons against shields. Rhythmic grunting from Ogrons, in time to their baton bashing.

OGRONS

(*Variously*) Move! Zalerians will disperse!

Move!

Crowd starts to scream.

Cross-fade to:

27. NARRATION.

SKERRILL

After the inevitable return, we nearly got used

to it. Almost as if hundreds of years of freedom had never

happened. Here we were, under Dalek rule again. But this time

there was more anger. So when the stranger came with his

warnings. And the Daleks started the torture and the murder. And cut deep into our planet to find their ancient army... We knew what we had to do.

28. EXT. JUNGLE.

Skimmer lands. Something like a helicopter. Door opens.

KALENDORF

This is the closest I could put us to the outer

sectors.

SKERRILL

They blasted the whole area clear... nothing

left... And nowhere for us to hide.

Distant sound of violent, rumbling machinery. (It's the Daleks, burrowing into the planet.)

KALENDORF

They're still digging. Couldn't have found it

yet.

SKERRILL

Mendac, Aytrax, prime the explosives.

KALENDORF

Best wait – until we've found the Dalek army

and have decided exactly how we're going to destroy them first. As it is, we haven't even found a way down –

SKERRILL

Kalendorf, we're hopelessly outnumbered.

When the time comes, we may find ourselves out of time and

options... And none of us are being taken prisoner, I promise you that.

Priming sounds on explosives.

MENDAC Primed.

AYTRAX

Primed. I spotted one of the old ice volcanoes to

the east.

MENDAC

Me too. Could be a good place to start.

KALENDORF

You knew, didn't you?

MENDAC Knew

what?

KALENDORF

All along, that there was a Dalek army buried

here.

SKERRILL

Only the Elders knew. But we all knew about

the Daleks. They're part of our ancient history, Karl. A shameful part.

KALENDORF Shameful?

SKERRILL

It's not widely known, but it's buried in our

sacred texts. Our people worked for the Daleks. Made it possible for them... (*She trails off*)

KALENDORF

Possible for them to... what?

Distant sound of Dalek transolar disc flying.

MENDAC Dalek

aerial

patrol.

SKERRILL

We'd better get moving. Aytrax?

AYTRAX

It was this way. Come on.

29. EXT. STREET. ZALERIA

Full riot in progress. Screams from crowd. Thunder of Ogron batons. Cross-fade to:

30. INT. SUE'S OFFICE.

The sounds of the riot are in background, but reasonably dominant.

Comms bleep.

SUZ

Susan Mendes to Dalek Control. Susan Mendes

to Dalek Control I demand that you answer me! You must stop

whatever you're doing to the Zalerian prisoners in your Command Block! Do you hear me? I demand –

Door bursts open.

SUZ

Ogrons... How dare you enter my office without

[permission!]

OGRON

You will come with us!

SUZ

I don't take orders from –

OGRON Take

her!

Huge footsteps of Ogrons stepping forward and grabbing her.

SUZ

No! You have no authority to – Aargh!

OGRON

Take her! Take her to our masters!

SUZ

You're breaking my arm!

OGRON Break

her

arm!

A nasty crunch.

Suz screams in pain. A moment of recovery as she pants loudly.

OGRON

Now... you will not resist. Take her to the

Daleks.

31. INT. DALEK LARORATORY.

DORLA

(*Distort*) Please... No more. The pain, we

can't... we can't –

Harsh bleep as comms are cut off.

DALEK AIDE

Lightwave projector experiments are

altering Zalerian external cellular structure. Readings indicate there is a pigmentation barrier.

DALEK SCIENTIST One more lightwave projection is all that is needed to destroy this barrier and confirm our prognosis. Fire projector immediately.

177

DALEK AIDE I

obey.

Lightwave projector fires.

The sound of Zalerians screaming in agony.

32. INT. DAIEK CONTROL.

Zalerians screaming in pain in background. Door opens.

OGRON Enter.

Suz struggles forward, in pain.

SUZ

What the hell are you doing to those

Zalerian workers?

DALEK

Silence or the Ogrons will inflict more

pain on you.

SUZ

You can break every bone in my body, but

I will not stand by and –

DALEK Ogron!

OGRON Yes,

master.

The thud of a huge punch impact. Suz gasps in pain and falls to the floor. Hold a few moments on her defeated groans of pain.

DALEK

Now you will remain silent.

Comms bleep.

DALEK

Control to laboratory Report!

DALEK SCIENTIST (*Distort*) Lightwave projection experiments have been successful. Observe.

Buzz of screen shifting image.

Music: sinister, disturbing.

SUZ

(*Aghast*) Oh, my... What...? What have you done to them?

(*N.B. She's seeing the Zalerians fade from view, going invisible –*

revealed later.)

DALEK SCIENTIST (*Distort*) Total success!

DALEK

You have done well Transmit test results

to main drillhead control in the outer sectors immediately.

DALEK SCIENTIST (*Distort*) I obey.

178

Comms bleep off.

SUZ

(*Groggy*) Why...? Why have you brought

me here?

DALEK

The indigenous life-forms are required for

slave labour and further experimentation, you will speak to them.

The insurrection will cease!

SUZ

And what if I refuse?

DALEK

Our records show you have extensive

knowledge of the Daleks. (*With extreme menace*) Need you ask that question of us, Susan Mendes?

33. INT. ICE VOLCANO.

Four pairs of feet climbing down rockface. Sounds of effort from Kalendorf, Skerrill, Mendac and Aytrax.

KALENDORF

(*Through gritted teeth of effort*) Too much of an

overhang. We'll have to jump the last bit. Is that ice surface solid, Skerrill?

SKERRILL

(*Effort*) Looks like it...

Rumble from beneath the surface.

MENDAC

(*Effort*) Is that the Daleks drilling?

AYTRAK

(*Effort*) Or this ice volcano about to erupt?

KALENDORF

Well... We can't just hang around here. We'll

have to take a chance. Wish me luck! (*The last word extends as he jumps*)

Feet land hard on ice surface. Kalendorf makes a gasp on impact.

KALENDORF

Seems safe enough.

More feet landing. The rumbling gets louder.

SKERRILL

Then that sound is definitely the Daleks drilling.

MENDAC

Let's hope they don't rupture the local ice

caverns. If that happens, we could find ourselves inundated with molten ice.

KALENDORF Yes... that's an odd phenomenon on your

planet, isn't it? But at least we know we're near to their drilling shaft.

179

A thunderous rumble.

SKERRILL

Perhaps too near.

34. INT. DALEK DRILLHEAD.

Deep whirling sound of drill running.

DALEK DRILLER Drillhead Control to Command. Scanners

indicate we are nearing point zero.

DALEK

(*Distort*) Proceed with all haste. Maximum

power to drillhead.

DALEK DRILLER I obey. Maximum power... now.

Drill running sound increases in pitch and intensity.

35. EXT. STREET. ZALERIA.

Full riot in progress as before. Buzz from P.A. speakers.

DALEK

(*Distort, echoing*) Attention! Attention rioting

workers! Attention! The Angel of Mercy will now speak to you

from Dalek Control!

The crowd slowly falls silent.

SUZ

(*Distort, echoing. She sounds defeated, in pain*)

People of Zaleria. Listen to my words carefully. You cannot defeat the Daleks. If you continue to... to challenge their authority...

(*Pause*) They will kill you. They will kill you all. I'm sorry... They have a secret mission here. I don't know what it is. But they are prepared to go to any lengths to complete this mission. They would prefer you to remain the efficient workforce you have become. But they are willing to sacrifice that, if necessary.

A rumble of crowd disapproval.

SUZ

(*Distort, echoing*) Listen to me. We cannot defeat

them. All the work we have done together will be destroyed if you continue to resist them. You must go back to your homes. There is...

(*She stops*)

DALEK

(*Distort, echoing*) Continue!

SUZ

(Distort, echoing) There is nothing we can do.

Perhaps, one day –

Buzz as she is cut off.

180

DALEK

(*Distort, echoing*) You have listened to the words

of the Angel of Mercy. Obey her now and your lives will be spared.

Resist... and you will be exterminated!

Music, doom-laden. Defeat.

36. INT. DALEK ARMY CAVERN.

The massive drill whirring comes closer and closer. A huge explosion of rock as the drill bursts through. Debris settles.

37. INT. DALEK DRILLHEAD.

DALEK DRILLER Total success! Point zero has been breached.

DALEK DRONE Scanning

point

zero.

Scanning fx.

DALEK DRILLER Report!

DALEK DRONE Scans reveal 1,100,000 Dalek units

submerged in approximately 30,000 cubic giga-Throns of molten

ice beneath a ten giga-Thron skin of solid, frozen ice.

DALEK

(Distort) You have your orders.

DALEK DRILLER Activate heat rays immediately.

DALEK DRONE I

obey.

Controls activated. A massive surge of power.

38. INT. DALEK ARMY CAVERN.

A whoosh of energy and a hiss of steam.

DALEK DRONE

(*Distort, echoing*) Ice now vaporising.

39. INT. VOLCANO CAVERN.

Distant rumble and hissing.

SKERRILL

Stop. What's that sound?

KALENDORF

I don’t know. Wait a minute, it’s –

MENDAC

It’s getting hotter!

AYTRAX But

how?

KALENDORF

It’ll be something to do with the Daleks, that’s

for certain.

181

Scuff of feet as Doctor approaches.

DOCTOR

You’re right. And I was wrong.

MENDAC

Who the –

KALENDORF

Doctor!? What do you mean?

DOCTOR

I thought I wasn’t meant to interfere. But that

can’t be right.

SKERRILL

What do you mean, ‘interfere’?

The massive hissing is getting louder.

AYTRAX

Skerrill, it really is getting very hot in here, we

should –

DOCTOR

Get out of the path of the scorching vapour? I couldn't agree more.

KALENDORF Scorching vapour?

DOCTOR

The Dalek army is buried in billions of tons of ice, isn't that right, Skerrill?

SKERRILL

It is, but how did...?

DOCTOR

Never mind how I knew. So how do you think the Daleks intend to get at their army?

KALENDORF

They're melting the ice, aren't they?

DOCTOR

And I can't let you get broiled alive. You're too important.

KALENDORF

Important? What do –

DOCTOR

Follow me. Quickly!

Footsteps run on rock.

This hissing gets suddenly louder, whooshing in.

Cross-fade to:

40. INT. DALEK DRILLHEAD.

Muted hissing. Bleeping of monitoring controls.

DALEK DRONE

Ice elimination continuing according to

projected targets. Heat ray units set at maximum safe temperatures, ten degrees below maximum tolerance for Dalek casings.

182

DALEK DRILLER Continue. Maintain optimum temperature.

Scanners indicate our army is commencing the first phase of

reactivation!

Cross-fade to:

41. INT. DALEK ARMY CAVERN.

Heat rays and massive hissing of vapour.

Music, builds to dramatic pitch. Dip to underscore as we cross-fade to:

42. INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM.

Door closes.

DOCTOR Everyone

safely

in?

MENDAC Just

about...

AYTRAX Yes...

DOCTOR Good.

SKERRILL

Doctor? You're... 'the Doctor'?

DOCTOR

Yes, Skerrill. I take it I'm remembered on

Spiridon?

KALENDORF 'Spiridon'?

SKERRILL

Yes. The true name of this planet.

DOCTOR

Anyone's perfectly entitled to change the name

of their planet. But you changed a lot more than that.

SKERRILL

We had to. We had no choice.

KALENDORF

What are you talking about?

DOCTOR

The terrible sacrifice the Spiridon people made.

Skerrill?

SKERRILL

As I told you, Kalendorf... Our planet was

occupied by the Daleks once before, generations ago. They

enslaved us... or rather, we agreed to work with them to save

ourselves.

KALENDORF

There’s no shame in that. But one day things

will be different and – [we’ll turn on them, defeat them.]

183

SKERRILL

But the Daleks came here for a... specific

reason. Not just to store a vast army; but to gain knowledge.

KALENDORF

Knowledge of what?

43. LIVE DALEK CONTROL.

SUZ

But why were you doing that to the Zalerians in

your laboratory? It was as if... as if they were just fading –

DALEK

Invisibility is the natural state of the Spiridons.

SUZ

Spiridons? Invis... I don’t – [understand]

DALEK

This is the planet Spiridon... not Zaleria. Zaleria

is a deception, to hide this planet from the Daleks. It has failed.

Now we have returned and our mission will be completed.

SUZ What

mission?

DALEK

You and Kalendorf will continue to serve the

Dalek Empire. You will be transported from this planet to begin your next assignment.

SUZ

Our work here isn't completed. Kalendorf is

working outside the city on important –

DALEK

He will be located. You will leave this planet.

Your time here is at an end. This is the order of the Dalek Supreme.

You will obey!!!

44. INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM.

KALENDORF

So they'll reactivate their Dalek army, and

make it invisible.

DOCTOR

It's a terrifying advantage. One that will tip the

balance. I thought my role was just to make sure nothing went

wrong here... But it seems I was wrong.

MENDAC

Wrong about what?

DOCTOR

I have to interfere. Become a part of history.

AYTRAX

Isn't that what you did when you came to

Spiridon before?

DOCTOR

(*Sighs*) Yes... Maybe this is my penance for not

doing the job properly the first time.

SKERRILL

But the Daleks never fully mastered invisibility.

184

The massive amounts of energy they had to expend to maintain it caused lightwave sickness. The prototypes all died.

DOCTOR

Haven't you ever heard of reverse engineering?

The Daleks will discover how you Spiridons have made yourselves appear to be visible. They'll reverse that process. And they hope that will give them the key.

MENDAC

The key to becoming... efficiently invisible?

DOCTOR

And they may just do it. How *did* your people

make themselves visible, by the way, Skerrill?

SKERRILL

Our forefathers subjected themselves to many

painful forms of treatment. Mostly based on the ingesting of cell-altering natural chemicals.

AYTRAX

Pigmentation and nutrients to decay the non-

reflective cellular properties.

DOCTOR Ingenious.

MENDAC

It's a vital part of our food chain now. But our

visibility is only skin deep. Our genetic coding is constantly trying to reinstate our invisibility.

KALENDORF

The force of nature is always hard to beat.

DOCTOR

You're quite a force of nature yourself,

Kalendorf, aren't you? And I have to make sure you... What shall I say? Fulfil your potential.

KALENDORF

What exactly do you mean by that?

DOCTOR

Oh, you'll find out soon enough.

KALENDORF

Look, I have had just about enough of your

cryptic –

DOCTOR

Yes, annoying, isn't it? But unfortunately, the

Daleks are something of a force of nature too. Genetically

programmed to conquer and destroy. And we have to stop them.

KALENDORF

(*Irritated*) Oh, and how are we going to do that?

DOCTOR

Well... I have a plan.

45. INT. DALEK ARMY CAVERN.

A final whoosh of steam. The heat rays shut down with a low 185

whirring and a final 'ker-chunk'.

DALEK DRONE

(*Distort, echoing*) Heat rays now shut down.

The hiss dies away.

The sound of water dripping in the vast, reverbed environment.

Cross-fade to:

46. INT. DALEK DRILLHEAD.

DALEK DRONE

Ice elimination now complete.

Comms bleep.

DALEK DRILLER Drillhead reporting to Dalek Control. Our army has been freed from the ice.

DALEK

(*Distort*) Scientific division will now

transfer to your location. Test results have been transmitted to you.

DALEK DRILLER Test results register as inconclusive.

DALEK (*Distort*) Work will continue until the problem of lightwave sickness has been eradicated. Then our army will be

made invisible and will proceed with the conquest of the galaxy.

No force will be able to stand against them!

47. INT. DALEK ARMY CAVERN.

The slow, low metallic grinding sound of a million or so Daleks grinding against each other. Dripping of water.

Cautious footsteps on wet rook. Their voices are low, cautious.

MENDAC

(*Distort*) Doctor, are those Daleks awake?

DOCTOR

Not fully. They've been in deep freeze for

generations.

KALENDORF

You mean it's going to take them time to fully

wake up?

DOCTOR Precisely.

AYTRAX How

long?

DOCTOR

Er... hopefully long enough.

AYTRAX For

what?

SKERRILL

Doctor, you look worried.

DOCTOR

Yes. How many chambers have we been

through?

KALENDORF About

twenty.

Why?

DOCTOR

And there are more ahead of us. Oh, dear.

SKERRILL ‘Oh,

dear’?

DOCTOR

Yes. Very ‘oh, dear’. When I was last on this

planet, there were reports of 10,000 Daleks. I’d say we’d passed about ten times that number already.

MENDAC

So the problem is bigger than you thought.

DOCTOR

Much bigger... but luckily that doesn’t affect

my plan.

KALENDORF

What exactly is your plan, Doc–

A particularly loud, close metallic grinding.

AYTRAX

Down everyone! That Dalek looks –

Dalek gun fires.

AYTRAX

(*Screams and dies*)

MENDAC Aytrax!

No!

DALEK

(*Groggily*) Intruuuuderrrrrrrssss. Allllleeeerrrrrt.

SKERRILL

We've got to help –

DOCTOR

Keep down! Didn't you learn anything from

your history. Poor Aytrax is dead.

Alarm echoes throughout the chambers.

DOCTOR

Oh, no. That's done it.

DALEK DRONE (Distort, echoing) Intruders! Intruders! Alert!

DOCTOR

Come on, we've got to get those charges of

yours to the heat emitters.

SKERRILL Heat

emitters?

KALENDORF

Well, the Daleks must have melted the ice with

something.

DOCTOR

Precisely, Kalendorf. And if I can destroy their

heat emitter control units and override the activation controls, we'll
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be able to set them at maximum –

KALENDORF

And melt the Daleks. Will it work?

DOCTOR

It has to work.

48. INT. DALEK CONTROL.

DALEK DRONE Kalendorf cannot be located.

DALEK

Where is Kalendorf? Answer!

SUZ

I told you. He's attending to important work.

Important work for the Dalek –

DALEK

Where is he?

SUZ

He didn't inform me of his precise location.

But, I trust him and –

DALEK

You are lying!

SUZ

I'm not lying! I genuinely don't know where –

DALEK

You cannot deceive the Daleks! You will tell us

where Kalendorf is or I shall order the Ogrons to harm you again.

SUZ

Do what you like!

DALEK

Do not pretend to be brave, Susan Mendes. I

have accessed extensive data on your personality and physical

responses from the Dalek Supreme. It is clear that you are afraid, that you are in pain. I calculate you will be unable to resist further pain. You can answer now, or when you have suffered. The choice is yours. Where is Kalendorf. (*Pause*) Ogron!

OGRON Yes,

master.

DALEK

Break her left leg. Now!

OGRON Yes,

master!

Sound of Ogron grabbing her.

SUZ

No! Aargh! No, no... all right. I'll answer! I'll

answer! Please!

DALEK Release

her.

OGRON Yes,

master.

Suz slumps to the floor.

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SUZ

(*Recovering*) Karl... Kalendorf told me about

the Dalek army buried on this planet.

DALEK

How did he know of this?

SUZ

I don't know! You have to believe me. If I

knew, I'd tell you! You must know that. I've served the Daleks faithfully

for many years now. You know you can trust

me. (*It's difficult for her to say, but she must.*) My loyalty is...

beyond question.

DALEK 1

Drillhead Control reports intruders have been

detected.

DALEK

They must be exterminated.

SUZ No!

DALEK

Is Kalendorf one of the intruders?

SUZ

I don't know, but... yes, yes, I suppose he must

be. You mustn't kill him. You have standing orders not to kill him.

He must accompany me on my missions. He is vital to our work!

That was a condition granted by the Dalek Supreme.

Pause.

DALEK

You are correct. Kalendorf is to be captured

alive. All other intruders will be exterminated.

SUZ

(*To herself*) I'm sorry, Karl... but I need you.

49. INT. DALEK ARMY CAVERN.

Dalek alarm is blaring. Daleks fly past.

DALEK DRONE (*Distort, echoing*) Airborne Daleks will locate intruders! Kalendorf is to be captured alive! Repeat, Kalendorf is to be captured alive!

Dalek announcement fades into background, as does the sound of flying Daleks.

Fade up on footsteps scrambling along wet rock.

KALENDORF

They know I'm here... (*Angrily*) Suz.

DOCTOR

I think I recognise this walkway... yes. This is

the chamber I entered when I was last on Spiridon.

KALENDORF

And you're hoping this'll be where the heat

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emitters are.

DOCTOR Yes.

A flying Dalek begins to swoop.

SKERRILL Get

down!

DALEK (*In distance*) Intruder located! Exterminate!

MENDAC

It's spotted me! Skerrill! Quick, take these

charges from me! Quickly!

DALEK (*Swooping in*) Exterminate!

Dalek gun fires. Impacts.

MENDAC Aaaaargh!

DOCTOR Get

down!!!

Massive explosion.

50. INT. DALEK CONTROL.

DALEK DRILLER (*Distort*) Intruders have been located.

SUZ

Karl… Have they found Kalendorf?

DALEK Silence!

DALEK DRILLER (*Distort*) One intruder destroyed.

SUZ

No! You said –

DALEK DRILLER (Distort) Three others sighted. One of them is wounded.

51. INT. DALEK ARMY CAVERN.

SKERRILL

(*Gasps in agony*)

KALENDORF

Skerrill, are you all right?

SKERRILL

Mendac… where's Mendac?

KALENDORF

The Dalek blast hit him and detonated his

charges… he didn't stand a chance… I'm sorry.

SKERRILL

Where's the Doctor?

KALENDORF He's taken your charges and run off

somewhere. He must've spotted the heat emitters.

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SKERRILL

Aargh... I can't move.

KALENDORF

You caught some of the blast, but you've got to –

An explosion some way off.

SKERRILL

What's going on?

KALENDORF

I think that'll be the Doctor, working on those

heat emitters.

52. INT. DRILLHEAD CONTROL.

An alarm bleeps.

DALEK DRONE

Emergency! Emergency! Heat projection

unit controls have been disabled by explosion in main chamber.

DALEK DRILLER Repair the systems immediately.

DALEK DRONE I

obey.

Controls activate. A rising hum of power.

DALEK DRILLER What is happening?

DALEK DRONE

Heat ray power has been activated.

DALEK DRILLER Shut down power!

Controls bleep. The operation is clearly unsuccessful.

DALEK DRONE

Power controls have been bypassed. Am

unable to shut down power.

53. INT. DALEK ARMY CAVERN.

Hum of power increasing.

KALENDORF

It's starting to get hotter. Well done, Doctor.

Come on, Skerrill, we've got to get you out of here.

SKERRILL

(*With great effort, through pain*) Well, we can...

can try... urgh...

DALEK GUARD Halt! Do not move!

Kalendorf groans in despair.

DALEK GUARD You are Kalendorf.

KALENDORF What

of

it?

DALEK GUARD You are to be taken alive.

KALENDORF

Can you hear me, Doctor?!?

DALEK GUARD Doctor?

KALENDORF

Do it! Never mind us! Destroy them! Melt

them! Destroy their whole damn army!

DALEK GUARD Alert! Temperature is rising!

KALENDORF

I'm sorry, Skerrill. There's no reason you

should die for this, but –

SKERRILL

There's every reason, Kalendorf. We failed the

galaxy once by collaborating with the Daleks. Now it's time to make amends. We can't let that army become operational.

KALENDORF

I know. And that's something worth dying for.

54. INT. DALEK CONTROL.

DALEK DRONE Dalek guard reports Kalendorf has referred to

'Doctor'.

DALEK

Scan for life signs in main arsenal.

Scanning fx.

DALEK DRONE Scanning.

SUZ

What are you doing?

DALEK Silence!

Blip.

DALEK DRONE Unknown life form detected in heat ray emitters.

Read-out.

DALEK

Life-sign readings correlate with known Time Lord profiles. It is the Doctor.

SUZ

Time...? Who is this Doctor?

DALEK

The Doctor is a known saboteur of Dalek operations and must be exterminated.

SUZ

Then exterminate him before he destroys everything in that cavern!

DALEK DRONE He has control of the heat ray. We cannot override his control.

DALEK

But the Doctor has compassion.

Comms bleep.

DALEK

Inform him that Kalendorf and the Spiridon will

be exterminated if he persists with his sabotage.

55. INT. DALEK ARMY CAVERN.

DALEK GUARD Doctor! I will exterminate Kalendorf and this Spiridon if you do not cease heat ray power build-up.

KALENDORF Don't you understand? There are more

important things than our lives at stake here.

Power hum starts to fall to lower pitch.

KALENDORF

What the hell...?

DALEK GUARD Temperature now falling.

Footsteps approach slowly.

DALEK GUARD You are the Doctor!

DOCTOR

Yes. And, unfortunately there isn't anything

more important than preserving your life, Kalendorf.

KALENDORF

What are you talking about? You could have

destroyed their army, melted them! What the hell's the matter with you?

DOCTOR

You have work to do. And I can't stand in the

way of that.

KALENDORF

(*Furious*) You idiot! You coward! You could

have –

DOCTOR

If you think that was idiotic, how about this?

Dalek, tell your leader... I can cure lightwave sickness.

SKERRILL No!

DOCTOR

Let these two go and I'll make your army

invisible. It'll take time, but I'll be able to do it, and do you know why? Because I'm cleverer than you.

DALEK GUARD Dalek technology is supreme. You will not be –

DOCTOR

Well, if you're so clever, why aren't they

invisible already? Come on, make them invisible. It's not like the Daleks to hang around and waste time. Get on with your galactic invasion. What's stopping you? I'll tell you what...

KALENDORF

Please, Doctor! Please, I'm begging you! You

can't do this!

DOCTOR

You've assimilated a vast amount of data by

torturing those poor Spiridons... but you can't make sense of it, can you?

KALENDORF

For pity's sake, man!

DOCTOR

(*To Dalek*) Come on... what does your

commander have to say?

Pause.

DALEK GUARD You will work for the Daleks!

KALENDORF You

traitor!

DOCTOR

Let these two go.

DALEK GUARD You are in no position to bargain.

DOCTOR

Yes, I am! Without my expertise... well, you

might as well have left this Dalek army frozen in the ice. Come on.

Let them go!

Pause.

DALEK GUARD Condition accepted.

KALENDORF

Don't expect me to thank you for this, Doctor.

You had a chance to strike a blow –

DOCTOR

Kalendorf, I just expect you and the Angel of

Mercy to... carry on the good work. Goodbye. I'm working for the Daleks now. And I really must get started.

Music: something that suggests inevitable disaster. Grim stuff.

Hold for a time, then fade into soft strings. Time is passing.

56. EXT . SPIRIDON SPACEPORT.

A large spaceship door clangs shut and seals.

Engines blast off. Spaceship soars skywards.

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Hold for a few moments, then cross-fade to:

57. INT. SPACESHIP.

Hold silence for a moment.

Just the muted rumble of the engines.

SUZ

I was wrong. (*Pause*) It's not so much that you don't trust me, Karl... You just hate me. (*Pause*) Don't you?

KALENDORF

I don't have time to hate you. We've got a job

to do.

SUZ

Who was that.. that man? That Doctor? The Daleks said

he was –

KALENDORF

I don't know, Suz! (*Suppresses anger*) I don't

know. I thought he was on our side. Maybe he was. Maybe he

wasn't. I just hope that one day... Huh, never mind.

SUZ No.

What?

KALENDORF

That all this makes sense. Everything we're

doing. Everything we've done and everything we've yet to do. It has to make sense.

SUZ

Yes. It has to, Karl.

KALENDORF

(*Cold*) Well, at least on that point, we're agreed.

Cross-fade back to rocket engines burning. Slowly fade.

58. NARRATION.

SKERRILL

The Doctor remained a prisoner of the Daleks

for many years. Most of my people thought he had been killed,

because... well... nothing happened. The Daleks remained on

Spiridon. Slave labour continued. The army didn't emerge. But

then, one day, our invisibility started to return to us. Centuries of cellular decay was reversed. We didn't know why for sure, but I knew it must've had something to do with the Doctor. Perhaps we'll never know what he did.

59. INT. DALEK LARORATORY.

DOCTOR

That should do it.

Alarms sounding.

DALEK DRONE

Emergency! Emergency! Contagion risk!

Emergency!

DALEK

What have you done? You have betrayed us!

DOCTOR

With pleasure. After working with you for all

these years... you're more than welcome.

A strange, fizzing sound starts to grow in intensity.

DALEK

You will be ex... exteeeerrrrmmmmmiiiinnaa–

DOCTOR

(*Experiencing pain*) It's... too late... too late for

that, Dalek! I've released your so-called 'cure' to visibility. It'll return... argh! It will return the Spiridons to... to their natural state!

Invisibility!

DALEK

But... but... I... cannot seeee... I...

DOCTOR

That's right. The rest of us... The rest of us are

going to... to die of... argh! Lightwave sickness.

Daleks shrieking with agony.

DOCTOR

(*Suffering terrible pain*) And do you know why

I've done it? Dalek? Do you know?

DALEK

No. Tell meeeeeeeee!

DOCTOR

Because I heard you talking to Dalek

Command. A rebellion has started, hasn't it? On a little planet called Yaldos. Kalendorf and Suz have finally done it... the Dalek Empire is going to be defeated.

DALEK Noooooooo!

DOCTOR

History is safe.

Cacophony of Dalek screams becomes all-consuming. Fade to a lingering echo. Then silence.

60. NARRATION.

SKERRILL

And when the Daleks started to fade from view

too, in our natural invisible state, we could see them dying. The cure to lightwave sickness hadn't been found. And they were all dying of it. Perhaps that's what happened to the Doctor. Perhaps he sacrificed himself for us.

61. INT. TAROK; CONTROL ROOM.

Door opens. Staggering footsteps of the Doctor. Laboured

breathing. He is in pain.

DOCTOR

(*Struggling*) Aargh. If I'm right... the

dimensional stasis of the TARDIS should... should neutralise the lightwave sickness, but... aaaaaargh! No, I can't... can't regenerate!

Cellular structure is paralysed, I... aargh!

Collapses.

Music. Passing of time...

DOCTOR

(*A deep breath as he wakes*) Mel? Ace... Hex?

Where... ? (*Realising*) All gone. Of course. Time passes. History moves on. And... is the sickness gone? (*Suddenly frantic*) Mirror, where's that mirror?

Much scrambling about and clatter of searching through bags and drawers. Finally the sound of a glass mirror emerging.

DOCTOR

(*Sigh of relief*) Yes, there I am. That's me. And

I beat them. (*Quietly triumphant*) I defeated you again, Daleks.

Catch me if you can.

Crash in closing Doctor Who theme.

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Why Are Daleks Supreme?

An Afterword by Nicholas Briggs

It's difficult to know who you are. You, I mean... the person reading this.

Have you been a lifelong fan of *Doctor Who* or have you joined in the fun with the glorious Russell T Davies reinvention of Doctor Who?

Have you listened to the Big Finish audio productions or are you a TV-only enthusiast, only now dipping into a Short Trips collection?

I ask these questions because I'm conscious of repeating myself. If you know the three series of *Dalek Empire* CD adventures, then you've read my various introductions and articles and you know that I've had an unfathomable connection with the Daleks since I was a nipper in welly boots and a duffle coat. If you've heard my Dalek voices in the recent television episodes, you might have even caught me grinning nervously on Richard and Judy's sofa or facing Bill Turnbull's mild curiosity on *BBC Breakfast*.

That's where the Daleks have led me... into the world of live

television with a splash of light entertainment. If all goes to plan, in the next week or so, I'll be popping up on a Children in Need concert and in a special *Doctor Who* edition of *The Weakest Link*... and I'm even doing the BT speaking clock for charity – as a Dalek, of course! So, on the surface of it, it's pretty clear why the Daleks are supreme for me. In recent years, they've been my job and my rather tasty bread and butter.

But it is odd, isn't it, that I should've had such a strong connection with such a thoroughly nasty bunch of pretend creatures. For years, people thought *Doctor Who* fans were odd. But at least it seems healthy and even laudable to be a follower of an essentially heroic character who rights wrongs and fights for good. To be a fan of something unpleasant and, frankly, genocidal just seems thoroughly unhealthy. And this brings into focus the contradiction of the Daleks... not a phrase I'll be using as yet another Dalek story title... not yet, anyway.

You can be a fan of the Daleks because they're a great piece of science fiction hardware. There's something beautifully odd about their design. Actor Kenneth Cranham, who recently featured in the Big Finish audio drama *Blood of the Daleks*, said to me that there was 198

something rather moving about standing next to one, posing for a photograph. He felt that they looked like something from another era, and I agree with him. And yet, an entirely new generation of children has completely swallowed the idea that they are the most terrifying creatures in the universe. Personally, I would never have believed they'd fall for it. But they have fallen for the Daleks... as if those forty-odd years had never passed.

On top of this, they are easy to mimic. All you have to do is shout a bit, speak in a mechanical, over-emphasised sort of way and say 'Exter-min-ate!' and everyone – in the UK at least – knows you're doing a Dalek. Cue lots of waffle from me that it's infinitely more subtle than that – clearly trying to justify my job! But there's no escaping the fact that we can all do a Dalek voice. And that's an essential element of a fantastical creation's popularity: you have to be able to impersonate it easily and recognisably. You have to be able to join in. Think of all the times you've heard people breathing heavily, proclaiming, 'I am your father!' Doing the funny voice is a given. So, they are innately fascinating. Writer Terry Nation was the divine spark; he made them evil and wrote their exciting story. Kay Cusick designed them on a shoestring budget and fathomed out the neatest, most cost-effective way of disguising the shape of a man sitting in a costume. As in many

'necessity being the mother of invention' situations, he came up with a physical creation that was inexplicably compelling. Brian Hodgson of the BBC's long-lamented Radiophonic Workshop thought it might be rather a good wheeze to use a General Post Office ring modulator to process a human voice. And actors Peter Hawkins and David Graham put in the squawking hours in front of the microphone, trying to work

out how these funny new monsters might actually speak.

Those are the root causes of the Dalek supremacy as creations for a television production.

But the contradiction arises when you consider their darker side.

Looking back to 1963, those times now seem perilously close to the terrible suffering of the Second World War. Our modern villains now tend to be terrorists, arms traders or corporate manipulators. Back then, if you wanted to tap into tangible villainy, you were almost bound to think of the enemy that had, just twenty years earlier, been poised to march through your streets or put you in a death camp. Your villains were bound to be preoccupied with racial purity, regimentation and the suppression of individuality. And with the Cold War in full flow, nuclear weapons were understandably likely to feature as well. The Daleks were born of this fusion of Nazi and nuclear horror. And yet, in a very strange way, they are kind of lovable. But they can only be lovable because they are not real. In the pretended reality of the dramas 199

they inhabit, they are the most horrific, sadistic killers and conquerors, lacking all traces of any human decency. And somehow they look like a cosy amalgam of domestic utensils – part toaster, part spin dryer, washing machine, electric radiator and pepper pot – and speak in a perpetually angry, ludicrous, squawking buzz that children love to mimic. But the comparison with diabolical dictators from history and current affairs is obvious. Viewed from an unthreatening perspective, most of our worst despots are small, socially awkward or ungainly, often with silly, commonplace affectations like daft facial hair or nerdy, unfashionable haircuts. But all this is horribly irrelevant, when said tyrants are invading your country or setting about genocide. Likewise, a Dalek, brandishing protuberances that look suspiciously like a sink plunger or an egg whisk suddenly doesn't look so daft in the context of *Doctor Who*'s 'reality' when they're blasting an innocent victim to death or massacring whole populations.

In some ways, the Daleks are a palatable rehearsal for the hatred and ridicule of true evil, in the same way that medieval plays mocked the executioners of Christ or silly Second World War songs poked fun at famous Nazis. But, most importantly of all, the fusion of the random contributions that have made the Daleks so popular creates a fictional monster that somehow manages, perfectly, to say to the audience, 'I am meant to be scary and horrible and you are meant to be afraid of me.'

It's a slightly more sophisticated version of putting a sheet over yourself and going, 'Woooo! I'm a scary ghost!' For those who watch or listen to *Doctor Who*, it's an almost universally recognised symbol for 'Bad Guy'. Terry Nation called them his 'heavies'... and the Daleks surely are the ultimate heavies.

And this is why the Daleks are supreme – because, with all this clear flagging-up of their unstoppable nastiness in place, they raise the stakes for the heroes who fight against them. Whether it is the Doctor in his many incarnations or the characters of the *Dalek Empire* series, they all have to raise their game in dramatic terms to defeat the Daleks. And in that way, these heroes become more exciting characters to watch, listen to and read about.

The Daleks make our heroes better, stronger and more compelling.

And that's why the survival of the Daleks is assured. We and our heroes need the Daleks, because the Daleks are the pitch black, impenetrable darkness that shows us how bright and inspiring heroism can be. And that is what really makes a ripping yarn.

Nicholas Briggs

November 2006

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About the Authors

NICHOLAS BRIGGS (editor) has written episodes of the soap opera *Family Affairs*, and wrote and directed the Doctor Who spin-off videos *Auton* and *Anton 2*. He's worked with Big Finish as an actor, producer, sound designer, director and writer since 1998, and has written several *Doctor Who* audio scripts as well as the *Dalek Empire* series. He directed and sound-designed two series of the acclaimed BBC Radio 4 comedy *Nebulous*. Nick is the voice of the Daleks, as well as the Cybermen and the Nestene Consciousness, in BBC TV's *Doctor Who*.

IAN FARRINGTON has edited four Short Trips collections – *Past Tense*, *Monsters*, *A Day in the Life* and *The Centenarian* – and is the range editor of the series. He has also written stories for *A Day in the Life*, *Short Trips: Life Science* and two anthologies in the *Bernice Summerfield* range. As well as edited numerous novels, short-story collections, script books and factual titles, Ian co-produced Big Finish's *UNIT* audio series and was the assistant producer of the company's *Doctor Who* range from 2002 until 2006. He has also contributed to

Doctor Who Magazine.

SHARON GOSLING is a non-fiction author, editor and journalist.

Before joining Big Finish as a producer, she launched official magazines for hit US science fiction series *Stargate SG-1*, *Stargate: Atlantis* and Ron Moore's 're-imagined' *Battlestar Galactica*. She also wrote four tie-in companions to the *Stargate* universe. This is her first published fiction.

SIMON GUERRIER (editor) has written five audio plays for Big Finish – *UNIT: The Coup*, *Professor Bernice Summerfield and The Lost Museum*, *Doctor Who: The Settling*, *Sapphire & Steel: The School* and *Bernice Summerfield: Summer of Love*. He has edited many short-story anthologies, including *Short Trips: The History of Christmas* and *Short Trips: Time Signature*, and is the producer of Big Finish's *Bernice Summerfield* range. His award-winning *Doctor Who* novel, *The Time Travellers*, was published by BBC Books in 2005.

JOSEPH LIDSTER has written extensively for Big Finish's series of *Doctor Who* audio dramas, with his second play, *Master*, being described by *Doctor Who Magazine* as 'the most moving *Doctor Who* story ever.' His third play, *Terror Firma*, won the *Doctor Who Magazine* poll for best audi0 play of 2005. He's written five *Doctor Who* plays as well as scripts for Big Finish's *Sapphire & Steel*, *Professor Bernice Summerfield*, *UNIT* and *Tomorrow People* ranges. He's also written short stories and a novella for the same company. In 2006, Joseph created an online gaming world for the BBC's *Doctor Who* spin-off websites.

JUSTIN RICHARDS is the author of over twenty novels ranging from *Doctor Who* books to the acclaimed *Invisible Detective* series for children. He has also written for television, audio and stage. His novel for older children, *The Death Collector*, was published in the UK by Faber & Faber in 2006. In his spare time he acts as Creative Consultant to the BBC Books *Doctor Who* range.

JAMES SWALLOW is a novelist and scriptwriter, creator of the *Sundowners* series of steam punk westerns and the only British writer to have worked on a *Star Trek* television series. His credits include the *Judge Dredd* audio dramas *Dreddline*, *Jihad* and *Grud is Dead*, and the *Space 1889* play *The Steppes of Thoth*.

More Astounding Stories of the Outer-Space Robot People Created by Terry Nation

Short Trips: Dalek Empire

EDITED BY

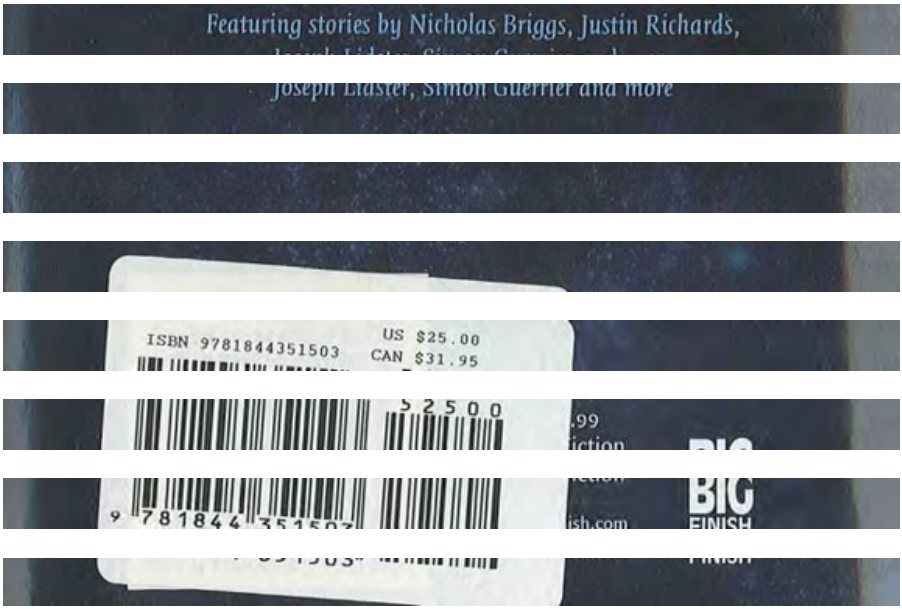
Nicholas Briggs

WITH SIMON GUERRIER

Everybody remembers *Doctor Who*'s most terrifying monsters, the metallic, murderous Daleks!

Here they are again in a collection of ripping yarns that draw upon the events and themes of Big Finish's acclaimed series Dalek Empire.

But never fear, no prior knowledge is necessary. The good Doctor in his many incarnations is on hand to guide us through the terrible events both before, after and during the Daleks' ruthless onslaught.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